WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF CREATION?

The Clear Religion Series - Part 1

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NO DOUBT THIS LIFE IS AN EXAMINATION
WHICH NEEDS YOUR FULL CONSIDERATION
AS TO WHAT YOU WILL TAKE TO
YOUR FINAL DESTINATION
ONLY TRUE BELIEF AND GOOD DEEDS ARE
YOUR WAY TO SALVATION

(Muhammad Sherif)

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HONORIFIC PHRASES IN THIS BOOK

(the Exalted): used after the mention of God/Allah to express: *Glorified and Exalted is He*

(bpuh): *Blessings and peace be upon him*; used after mention of the Prophet Muhammad

(pbuh): *Peace be upon him*; used after mention of any prophet or after mention of Angel Gabriel

(May Allah be pleased with him): used after mention of a male Companion of the Prophet

(May Allah be pleased with her): used after mention of a female Companion of the Prophet

(May Allah be pleased with all of them): used after mention of three or more Companions of the Prophet

ABOUT THE WORD ‘LORD’

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is ‘master’ or ‘ruler’, and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: ‘the lord of the mansion’ or ‘*Lord* So-and-So’ (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God—Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital L may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah—not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

ABOUT THE WORD ‘ALLAH’

Although the English word ‘God’ has often been used interchangeably in this book with the word Allah, there is a difference. ‘Allah’ is the word in Arabic that is translated as ‘God’. However, ‘Allah’ has a much more precise meaning than ‘God’. ‘Allah’ is not merely an Arabic term for the word ‘god’. Instead, the root word of the word ‘Allah’ is *ilah*, which means ‘a god’. There are countless numbers of made-up ‘gods’, but only One True God worthy of worship, Whose name is Allah. The word ‘Allah’ literally means ‘the worshipped’, or ‘the God’. Allah is, thus, the proper name for the **only Being that is worthy of worship in truth**, the True Creator of the universe. By saying ‘Allah’, Muslims are, in essence, negating every other entity which people wrongfully worship, while affirming worship to Him alone. The name ‘Allah’ is how God Almighty has referred to Himself in the Quran, and how Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) also referred to Him. Therefore, in this work, the term ‘Allah’ will often be used in reference to this One and Only God Who is worthy of worship.

INTRODUCTION

Wise individuals know that their existence has a purpose and a final destination, whether or not they are aware of the exact nature of that destination. Wise individuals also understand that if they do not know where they are going, they will never strive to reach there. This book sheds some light on the following:

- Why were human beings created?
- What is their final destination?
- How can they reach that destination?

Every individual is born into a religious environment that is not necessarily in accordance with his or her choice; children are raised to follow the religion or ideology of their family, society, or culture. Even as new-born babies, they are assigned either the religion of their family or the ideology of the state; in some countries, the child's assigned religion is even recorded on the birth certificate. By the time individuals reach their teens, they have usually accepted the beliefs of their parents or their particular society. Since these beliefs have come to feel normal to them, they may give no thought to examining and possibly changing them.

However, individuals often encounter, or are exposed to, various beliefs and ideologies throughout the course of their lives, leading many to question long-held beliefs, traditions, or philosophical ideas. They begin to question the

validity of their own beliefs. Seekers of truth often reach a point of confusion, especially upon realizing that the believers of every religion, sect, ideology, and philosophy claim to profess the one and only truth.

There are only three possibilities: 1) everyone is correct, 2) everyone is incorrect, or 3) only one is correct and the rest are incorrect. It is impossible for all of them to be upon the true religion since the fundamentals of all religions are different. On the other hand, to claim that they are all incorrect is to deny that Allah (the Exalted) revealed His will to humankind. This proposition will seem absurd to those who believe in a wise Creator. After all, why would Allah create human beings and not reveal a way to the truth? So **which religion is the right one, and how can the seeker of truth come to know it?** This is the main subject of this work.

When beginning the search for the true religion, one should keep in mind the following four things:

Firstly, Allah has given us the ability and the intellect to discover the answer to this crucial question, which is also a life-changing decision: **What is the true religion?**

Secondly, Allah, the Most Compassionate, has not left us to go astray without any guidance. Indeed, He sent us prophets with scriptures to show us the right path.

Thirdly, we should always remember the underlying reason for this search: the everlasting life to come depends upon adopting the true religion in this life. This should be our ultimate

motivation and a driving force to keep us searching until we are completely satisfied.[1]

Fourthly, we can only determine the true path and make a rational and correct decision if we willingly put aside all the emotions and prejudices which often blind us to reality.

With this short preface, I leave you to peruse this book, which has been adapted from my book *Who Deserves to Be Worshipped?*

Kind regards,

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[1] The Bible, in its present form, confirms that seeking the truth is the main cause for salvation. In John 8:32, it has been stated, “and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Muslims believe that the existing versions of the Bible contain elements of the original true message, although it has been altered significantly.

1. PROOF OF ALLAH'S EXISTENCE

This great universe and everything in it cannot be the product of chance, and it could not have created itself. Signs testifying that Allah is the only Creator can be seen throughout the universe and in the very soul of each person. Allah has said in the Quran:[2]

{It is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down rain from the sky and produced thereby some fruits as provision for you and subjected for you the ships to sail through the sea by His command and subjected for you the rivers. And He subjected for you the sun and moon, continuous [in orbit], and subjected for you the night and the day. And He gave you from all you asked of Him. And if you should count the favours of Allah, you could not enumerate them...} *(Quran 14: 32-34)*[3]

In the Quran, Allah has mentioned how Prophet Abraham tried to show his people the futility of worshipping the creation instead of the Creator. This is an example of how those who follow Allah's

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[2] The Quran is the sacred book or scripture revealed to Prophet Muhammad (bpuh). More information about the Quran is given in Chapter 9: The Six Articles of Islamic Faith.

[3] The translations of the meanings of the Quranic verses in this book have been taken from Saheeh International, *The Quran: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*. Please note that any quotation in this book from the Quran is the translation that we feel has the closest meaning to its original Arabic. The translation is not the Quran itself.

signs will be rightly guided to the worship of Him alone.

{And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the certain [in faith]. So when the night covered him [with darkness], he saw a star. He said: This is my lord. But when it set, he said: I like not those that disappear. And when he saw the moon rising, he said: This is my lord. But when it set, he said: Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the people gone astray. And when he saw the sun rising, he said: This is my lord; this is greater. But when it set, he said: O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah. Indeed, I have turned my face toward He Who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah.}

(Quran 6: 75-79)

The strongest proof for Allah's existence is the creation itself. According to the laws of nature as we know them, something cannot be created from nothing; therefore, our natural world must have originated from the supernatural. Allah continuously instructs humankind to observe the universe, as this will affirm the divine truth of His existence and His greatness, along with the fact that He alone should be worshipped.

Another obvious fact: **He answers our prayers.** When an individual prays (supplicates) to Allah, He answers his or her prayer; this is an indication of Allah's existence. Allah has said in the Quran:

{And your Lord says: Call upon Me; I will respond to you…}

(Quran 40: 60)

2. THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

Have you ever wondered why we exist? What is the reason for our existence? Have you ever wondered why we die and where we will go after death? What will happen to us in the end? Have you ever asked yourself why Allah has made the earth, and all that is in it, subservient to human beings? Why were the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, created? What are we supposed to do during our lifetime? Were we created just to eat, drink, and enjoy ourselves before we die? A poet has summarized this timeless question:

I do not know whence I have come.
I saw my feet walking on the road.
As they please, I go and stop.
What am I doing here?
How did the road find me?
I do not know! I do not know! I do not know!

Allah has emphasized in many verses of the Quran that He did not create human beings without a purpose. He has said:

{Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned?} *(Quran 23: 115)*

{Does humankind think that it will be left neglected?} *(Quran 75: 36)*

{Do the people think that they will be left to say: We believe—and they will not be tried?} *(Quran 29: 2)*

It is clear from these verses that human beings were not created without a purpose. This purpose

has been mentioned clearly in another verse that says:

{And I did not create the *jinn*[4] and humankind except to worship Me.} *(Quran 51: 56)*

Hence, the main purpose of creation is **to worship the Creator alone**. This is called monotheism.

Islam sets out for human beings a vision which is strikingly simple yet completely logical. Indeed, why would the Creator of the universe shroud in mystery the main message that He wants humankind to understand—their one key to winning paradise in the hereafter? How then would He expect humankind to arrive at the truth? It is clear that human beings must revert to their basic instinct regarding the Creator of the universe; they must shed the layers of indoctrinated ideologies and man-made teachings that cover that instinct. Humankind must reclaim its birthright; it must reclaim Islam.

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[4] *jinn*: non-human, rational beings created by Allah from fire.
Note: Wherever possible, Arabic terms have been translated into English. In cases where we have chosen to retain the Arabic, the transliterated word or phrase is shown in italics the first time it appears in the text; the term is also defined in the glossary found at the end of this book.

3. MONOTHEISM: THE MESSAGE OF ALL THE PROPHETS

All the prophets instructed their people to worship Allah alone (monotheism) and to shun worshipping His creation (paganism). Allah has said:

{And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger [saying]: Worship Allah and avoid *taghoot...*}[5] *(Quran 16: 36)*

Prophet Abraham (pbuh), for example, believed in One God (Allah), Who has no partner. The Quran has explained:

{And [We sent] Abraham, when he said to his people: Worship Allah and fear Him. That is best for you, if you should know.}

(Quran 29: 16)

Allah has also said about him:

{And [mention, O Muhammad] when Abraham said to his father and his people: Indeed, I am disassociated from that which you worship, except for He Who created me; and indeed, He will guide me.}

(Quran 43: 26-27)

Although the Bible has been altered a great deal, Prophet Jesus (pbuh) was reported in the Gospels to have said, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.” (Luke 4:8)[6]

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[5] *taghoot*: idols; anything that is worshipped other than Allah.

It also mentions that God has said, “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.” (Isaiah 44:6)

According to the Gospel of Mark, when Jesus (pbuh) was asked what the most important command was, he replied that it was, “The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” (Mark 12:29)

The Book of Acts 3:13 says, “The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus…”[7]

The Quran tells us that Prophet Joseph (pbuh) said to his people:

{You worship not besides Him except [mere] names you have named them, you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. Legislation is not but for Allah. He has commanded that you worship not except Him. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.} *(Quran 12: 40)*

This is why Allah, the Exalted, has described those who deviate from Abraham’s message (of monotheism) as the ones who are fooling themselves. He has said:

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[6] The translations of Bible verses are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

[7] The use of the word ‘servant’ does not imply that God (Allah) needs assistance or help. A servant here equates to a slave who devotes himself or herself to worship by obeying Allah’s commands and shunning what He forbids. See Chapter 11: The Meaning of Worship in Islam.

{And who would be averse to the religion of Abraham except one who makes a fool of himself...?} *(Quran 2: 130)*

4. THE BASIC MESSAGE OF ISLAM

The basic message of Islam is the same as the message of all the previous prophets: worship Allah **alone** and avoid worshipping anything besides Him, whether it is a person, place or thing—directly or indirectly, secretly or openly. This basic principle of monotheism is contained in the fifth verse of the first chapter of the Quran, known as 'The Opening':

{It is You we worship and You we ask for help.} *(Quran 1: 5)*

Allah has also said:

{Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him…} *(Quran 4: 36)*

{…So whoever disbelieves in taghoot and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold, with no break in it…}

(Quran 2: 256)

Muhammad (bpuh), the last prophet, is reported to have said:

«Anyone who says, "There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah" and dies holding that belief will be granted paradise.»

(Recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)[8]

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[8] *Saheeh al-Bukhari* and *Saheeh Muslim* are two collections of the authentic, documented traditions and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh), as recorded by the scholars Bukhari and Muslim respectively. Other collections have also been used as references in this book.

5. PROOFS THAT ONLY ALLAH DESERVES TO BE WORSHIPPED

Here is an obvious fact: **Allah is the sole Creator and Sustainer of everything**. This makes Him the only one deserving of our worship. It's really that simple. Supplication, for example, is an act of worship, where individuals direct their hearts to Allah and specify to Him their needs. Allah has instructed us to call upon Him:

{And your Lord says: Call upon Me; I will respond to you…}

(Quran 40: 60)

The question then arises: Why do people direct their worship to created objects such as idols? The fact is that the idols have no power of their own; anything that results from that act of worship only comes about through the permission of Allah. When a person prays to an idol and his or her prayers are answered, it is not the idol which actually answers the prayers, but Allah. Similarly, prayers to Jesus Christ (pbuh), Buddha, Krishna, Saint Christopher, Saint Jude or Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) are not answered by them; they are answered by Allah. Consequently, prayers directed to anyone or anything other than Allah are of no avail, and the same applies to all other acts of worship, including charity and fasting. They must all be directed to Allah alone.

The prophets were very explicit in their teachings that only Allah should be worshipped, and they were sent to teach this very message. They claimed neither fame nor status, and never once did they instruct the people to direct acts of worship to themselves; on the contrary, they warned their people against doing just that. For example, Islam teaches that Prophet Jesus (pbuh) was a human being who was created by Allah in a miraculous way. He was born of a mother, Mary, without a father. He himself was neither God (Allah) nor the son of God, and he worshipped Allah. He was not one of three manifestations of God, as Christians claim; nor was he the son of a prostitute, as some Jews have alleged. He told his people (the tribes of Israel) to worship Allah alone —not to worship either himself or his mother. Furthermore, Prophet Jesus (pbuh) did not direct his acts of worship to himself; he worshipped Allah alone.

Those who claim to be the followers of Jesus Christ actually do something other than what he taught; they worship Jesus himself. Some worship Mary, claiming that she is the mother of God. If Jesus himself did not instruct them (anywhere in the Bible) to worship him or his mother (much less a statue or picture of either of them, or a cross), how can they do this very act and yet claim to follow his message?

Allah has said in the Quran:

{They have certainly disbelieved who say: Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary—while the Messiah has said:

O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Indeed, he who associates others with Allah—Allah has forbidden him paradise, and his abode is the fire. And there are not for the wrongdoers any helpers.}

(Quran 5: 72)

Allah has also warned in the Quran that He will question Prophet Jesus (pbuh) on the Day of Judgement regarding the Christians' worship of him and his mother:

{And [beware the day] when Allah will say: O Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to the people: Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah? He will say: Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who are Knower of the unseen. I said not to them except what You commanded me—to worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. And I was a witness over them as long as I was among them; but when You took me up, You were the Observer over them, and You are, over all things, Witness.} *(Quran 5: 116-117)*

Prophet Jesus (pbuh) was given life; he was born from a woman's womb and was circumcised. He felt hunger, pain and weariness. Since all these attributes are those of human beings and not of God (Allah), it is clear that Jesus was not God (Allah).

Similarly, Buddha was a reformer who introduced a number of humanistic principles into the Hindu religion practiced in India. He did not

claim to be God, nor did he suggest to his followers that he should be worshipped. Yet today, most Buddhists have made him their God, and they prostrate themselves before idols representing his likeness. Even in the supposedly monotheistic religions of Judaism and Christianity, followers over the ages have elevated a select few rabbis and church officials to the status of law-givers who proclaim laws that are in direct contradiction to the laws brought by their prophets. This is a form of worshipping the creation instead of the Creator, Who tells us that:

{They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah…}

(Quran 9: 31)

Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) explained this verse to mean that by unquestioningly obeying them in matters which they made lawful or unlawful according to their desires, without any sanction from Allah, they have given these rabbis and priests the status of deities. Briefly, from the perspective of object-worship, all religions today (except Islam) invite people to the worship of creation in one form or another!

It should be noted here that some non-Muslims incorrectly label Islam as ‘Mohammedanism.’ This phenomenon exists because it is tempting to elevate a beloved individual like Muhammad (bpuh) to a status far above his teachings, as was done in other religions. This is ironic since his very message was the negation of equating human

beings (**any** human beings) with Allah. Islam teaches that Muhammad (bpuh) was a human messenger who, like all other human beings, was required to worship Allah rather than be elevated to the status of Allah and be worshipped himself. Muhammad was a messenger **and** a slave of Allah;[9] that is all.

Allah's attributes prove that He alone deserves to be worshipped.

He is One, without relatives; He has no father, son, mother, or wife. He is the Eternal Absolute. He neither gives birth nor was born; indeed, there is nothing like Him. He is perfect in His knowledge, His power, His will, His mercy, and all His other attributes. Allah is all-powerful and perfect, while human beings are weak and imperfect. That is how He has defined Himself and how all prophets have defined Him.[10] Therefore, it is only befitting that we direct all acts of worship to the One Who fits this description. Worshipping anything else is futile.

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[9] The status of a 'slave' of Allah is the most beloved and honoured position before Allah, and this status applies to all of His prophets and true followers. For more details, see Chapter 11: The Meaning of Worship in Islam.

[10] This agrees with what is mentioned in the Gospel of Barnabas, Chapter 17, where Jesus said:

> He alone hath no equal. He hath had no beginning, nor will he ever have an end, but to everything hath He given a beginning, and to everything shall He give an end. He hath no father nor mother; He hath no sons nor brethren nor companions.

(The Gospel of Barnabas is not included in today's Bible, but it is available on the Internet.)

Another proof is the teaching of Islam that every soul has been imbued with the awareness of Allah and with a natural inclination towards worshipping Him alone. In the Quran, Allah has explained that when He created Adam (pbuh), He caused all of Adam's descendants to come into existence; then He took a pledge from all of them, saying:

{…Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes, we have testified…}

(Quran 7: 172)

Allah has then explained why He had all of humankind bear witness that He is their Creator and the only true God, the only one worthy of worship:

{…[This]—lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: Indeed, we were of this unaware.} *(Quran 7: 172)*

Allah has further elaborated on this point, saying:

{Or [lest] you say: It was only that our fathers associated [others in worship] with Allah before, and we were but descendants after them. Then would You destroy us for what the falsifiers have done?}

(Quran 7: 173)

Therefore, people who associate partners with Allah in worship cannot claim on that day that they had no idea that Allah is the only One Who deserves to be worshipped. (If an individual never received any information about the right religion,

though, he or she will be given a chance to accept it on the Day of Judgment.)

Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) reported that Allah has said:

«I created my slaves following the right religion, but the devils made them go astray.» (Recorded by Muslim)

Also, Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) said:

«Each child is born in a state of Islam. Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian.» (Recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Thus, Islam is the **birthright** of every human being, since every child is born with a natural belief in the existence of Allah and an inborn inclination towards worshipping Him alone. Just as children submit to the physical laws which Allah has imposed on this physical world, their souls submit naturally to the fact that Allah is the only Lord and Creator. However, if their parents are following a different path, the children are usually neither strong enough nor aware enough to recognize the truth; even if they do, they cannot resist the will of their parents. In such cases, the religion that the children ultimately follow is in line with their customs and upbringing. However, Allah, the Most Merciful and Compassionate, will not hold them to account or punish them for following a false religion before they reach the age of reason and unless they are exposed to the pure message of Islam.

To sum up, one can naturally, without the aid of other human influences, come to the conclusion that only Allah deserves to be worshipped. This conclusion is neither confusing nor elaborate; it can be arrived at by even the most uneducated. What happens, though, is that human influences often turn people away from this natural belief, which is why it needs to be explained here.

6. THE MESSAGE OF FALSE RELIGIONS

False religions, on the other hand, all teach **the worship of creation (paganism)** in one way or another. Some religions call indirectly towards idolatry, while proclaiming Allah's Oneness; others openly invite people to worship other gods along with Allah, instead of calling towards the worship of Allah alone (pure monotheism). Idolatry is the greatest sin that a human being can commit because it diverts worship from the Creator to His creation. It necessarily implies elevating the creation to the status of Allah and thus equating His creation with Him. This explains why idolatry is the greatest sin a human being can commit. Anyone who dies in a state of idolatry has sealed his or her fate in the hereafter.

{Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills…} *(Quran 4: 48)*[11]

Human beings should not worship anything or anyone other than Allah. This is because it makes no sense to worship the creation, which is weak in nature, and neglect the Creator Who controls this creation and the whole universe! Not only is this act misdirected and futile, but it is also a manifestation of ingratitude to the One Who has created everything. Allah has said in the Quran:

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[11] The same wording is also found in Quran 4: 116.

{Do they associate with Him those who create nothing and they are [themselves] created? And the false deities are unable to [give] them help, nor can they help themselves. And if you [believers] invite them to guidance, they will not follow you. It is all the same for you whether you invite them or you are silent. Indeed, those you [polytheists] call upon besides Allah are slaves like you. So call upon them and let them respond to you, if you should be truthful. Do they have feet by which they walk? Or do they have hands by which they strike? Or do they have eyes by which they see? Or do they have ears by which they hear...?} *(Quran 7: 191-195)*

Allah has also said:

{Say [O Muhammad]: Invoke those you claim [as deities] besides Allah. They do not possess an atom's weight in the heavens or on the earth, and they do not have therein any partnership [with Him], nor is there for Him from among them any assistant.} *(Quran 34: 22)*

So if these entities {do not possess an atom's weight in the heavens or on the earth}, how can they help the one who worships them? Allah has pointed out the simple fact that:

{...those you call upon besides Him are unable to help you, nor can they help themselves.} *(Quran 7: 197)*

Some idol worshippers try to justify what they are doing by saying, "We treat idols as mediators and intercessors between Allah and us." This belief is based on the false comparison between Allah and kings, who often operate using mediators between

them and their people. This is an incorrect belief because Allah does not need mediators between Him and His creation. Being All-Knowing and not limited by natural boundaries, He hears and knows everything, and He can respond directly to all the needs of His creation. In hundreds of Quranic verses, Allah has invited all human beings to have a direct relationship with Him without any mediator or intercessor; He has prohibited them from worshipping anything other than Him under any circumstances.

The use of different deities (represented by idols and statues) as intermediaries and mere 'channels' began with the people of Prophet Noah (pbuh). Earlier generations had built statues of pious individuals, intending only to honour them, but their descendants began to take them as objects of worship. Allah sent Noah to call his people back to monotheism, and then He continuously sent prophets to call people to monotheism and forbid idolatry; nevertheless, this phenomenon has existed to some extent ever since it was introduced. At the time of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh), there were many people who said they believed in Allah as the Creator and the Sustainer but who defended their use of idols as merely a means of drawing closer to Allah or having their prayers answered. This practice is still common; many people say that they believe in one God, yet they rely upon statues, superstitions and other symbols (or traditions) as a way to worship and invoke God for their needs.

Allah, the Exalted, has specified that anyone who attributes deity to another being in addition to Allah will be left with that other entity on the Day of Judgement, calling on it for help. Individuals falsely hope that these entities will somehow help them when needed. In reality, this is of no avail because the entities will disassociate themselves from the people on the Day of Judgement (when the people are most in need of help).

{Those upon whom the word will have come into effect will say, “Our Lord, these are the ones we led to error. We led them to error just as we were in error. We declare our disassociation [from them] to You. They did not used to worship us.} *(Quran 28: 63)*

Allah, the Most Wise, has not prescribed any religious beliefs or rites that would affect the direct relationship between Himself and human beings, yet religions such as Hinduism or Buddhism, belief in a human being as a saviour or an intermediary, and rites such as baptism and confession have done just that.

7. ALLAH AND HIS CREATION

Islam emphasizes that Allah and His creation are distinct entities. Allah is not part of His creation, nor does He intermix with it. His creation is neither equal to Him in terms of His attributes nor a part of Him. Indeed, Allah is the Most High; He is above all His creation, above the heavens, and above His Throne, as He has informed us about Himself in the Quran and in the previous scriptures.

This might seem obvious, but people's worship of creation instead of the Creator is, to a large degree, based on ignorance or negligence of this fact. The erroneous belief that the essence of Allah is everywhere in His creation, or that He is a part of His creation, is used to justify the worship of Allah's creation. Philosophical idol worshippers justify their idolatry by saying that they do not actually worship the stone or the metal object; they only worship Allah, Who becomes concentrated in it during their rituals of worship. They claim that the stone idol is only a focal point for Allah's essence and is not Allah itself! Anyone who accepts the concept of Allah being present in any way within His creation will be obliged to accept this argument to justify idolatry.

Setting aside such motivations as financial gains or fame, people's claims to divinity have largely manifested based on the mistaken belief that it is possible for Allah to be present in humans. Taking this belief one step further, they claim that Allah

is more present in them than in others, and people should therefore submit to them and worship them as Allah's incarnate or as Allah concentrated within their person. Similarly, those who have asserted that others were gods have found fertile ground among those who accept the false belief of Allah's presence in human beings.

As far as the doctrine of incarnation held by late Christians is concerned, it was developed after Jesus' departure. It was incorporated into Christianity from paganism. In the mythology that preceded Christianity, it can be seen how some heroes were considered to be gods.

The vast majority of Christians today pray to Jesus, claiming that he is God (Allah). The philosophers among them claim that they are not worshipping Jesus the man; they are only worshipping God (Allah), who was manifest in Jesus the man. This is also the rationale of pagans who bow down to worship the idols. As mentioned before, when a pagan philosopher is asked why he or she worships an idol which was made by human hands, he or she replies that he or she is not really worshipping the idol. Furthermore, he or she may claim that the idol is only a focal point for the presence of Allah, and thereby claim to worship Allah who is manifest in the idol, and not the physical idol itself. There is little or no difference between that explanation and the answer given by Christians for worshipping Jesus. The origin of this deviation lies in the false belief that Allah is present in His creation. Such a belief (erroneously) justifies the worship of Allah's creation.[12]

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[12] Philips, *The True Message of Jesus Christ*, 69.

Islam has freed its followers from such superstitions by rejecting the doctrine of the incarnation.[13] The divinity of Jesus has been rejected in the noble Quran in many verses. Let us take two of them:

{They have certainly disbelieved who say: Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary…} *(Quran 5: 72)*

{Say: He is Allah, [Who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent.}

(Quran 112: 1-4)

These two verses clearly specify that neither Jesus nor any other prophet resembles Allah in an attribute or in essence, and hence, nothing can be an incarnation of Him.

Consider the following. In the south-eastern region of the Amazon jungle in Brazil, South America, a primitive tribe erected a new hut to house their main idol Skwatoo, representing the supreme God (Allah) of all creation. The following day a young man entered the hut to pay homage to his god. While he was prostrating to what he had been taught was his creator and sustainer, a mangy, old and flea-ridden dog slunk into the hut. The young man looked up just in time to see the dog lift its hind leg and pass urine on the idol. Outraged, the young man chased the dog out of the temple, but when his rage died down, he

[13] Incarnation: the belief that God came to Earth in human form and that Jesus was both fully God and fully human. (Christian sects differ on some of the details of this theology.)

realized that the idol could not be the Lord of the Universe. He came to the conclusion that God must be elsewhere. As strange as it may seem, the dog urinating on the idol was a sign from God for that young man that his idol did not deserve to be worshipped. This sign contained the divine message that what he was worshipping was false. It liberated him from following his tradition unquestioningly, a tradition that proved to be erroneous. As a result, this man was given a choice: either to seek the true God or to continue in the error of his ways. This example illustrates the fact that humans are capable at arriving at the truth on their own, regardless of society, etc.[14]

Clearly, if one follows this story to its logical conclusion, it means either that God does not have the attributes that He claims to have or that God is no different from His own creation. Both conclusions negate the idea of an All-Powerful God, so both must be false. Islam teaches that God is too great and perfect to lower Himself to the level of likeness to His creation or to mix with His creation.

To conclude, all false religions share one basic concept with regard to God: that there is no clear distinction between God and His creation. They may claim that all humans are God, that specific individuals are God, that nature is God, that God is a figment of people's imagination, or that a person or other entity is a mediator between people and God (as mentioned in the previous chapter). It may be said that by equating human beings with God,

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[14] Philips, *The True Religion of God*.

false religions invite humans to worship the creation instead of the Creator.

8. THE MEANING OF THE RELIGION'S NAME: 'ISLAM'

Further evidence that Islam is the true religion comes from the meaning of the word 'Islam' itself. Basically, 'Islam' is an Arabic word that denotes submission and obedience. As a religion, Islam has two meanings, one general and one specific.

In general, the word 'Islam' refers to the religion that God revealed to all the prophets: the worship of God alone (monotheism) and the avoidance of paganism. This explains why, in the Quran, all prophets have called themselves Muslims. All prophets taught the basic message of Islam (monotheism); they differed only in the detailed message of Islam (Sharia, or "canonical teachings"). Their sincere followers were Muslims as well.[15] Consequently, one should not regard Islam as an innovation that was brought by Prophet Muhammad (bpuh). Instead, it should be regarded as the original message of Allah (in its fundamentals) to all the prophets throughout history.

Specifically, the word 'Islam' refers to the religion that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad

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[15] Jesus was reported to have said:

> Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17-18)

(bpuh). No other religion was **specifically given** its name by Allah.

Islam was not named after a person or a group of people; nor was its name decided upon by later generations of humans. Indeed, the name 'Islam' was given by Allah Himself, as is clearly mentioned in many verses of the Quran, for example:

{Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam…}
(Quran 3: 19)

On the other hand, Christianity was named (by its followers) after Jesus Christ, and Judaism after the tribe of Judah. It is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible that the religion of the followers of Prophets Isaac and Moses (peace be upon them) and their descendants is called Judaism, or that the religion of the followers of Christ[16] is called Christianity. In other words, the names 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' had no divine origin or approval. It was not until long after Jesus' ascension[17] that the name 'Christianity' was given to the religion of

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[16] Both the names 'Jesus' and 'Christ' are derived from Hebrew words, through Greek and Latin. Jesus is the English equivalent and Latin form of the Greek 'Iesous', which in Hebrew is 'Yeshua'. 'Christos' is a Greek translation of the Hebrew 'messiah' and the Arabic *masaha*, which means to rub, to massage, to anoint.

[17] The Quran has mentioned that Jesus was neither killed nor crucified on a cross; rather, Allah raised him to the heavens, and Jesus will come into this world again before it ends. This has been discussed in detail in al-Rassi, *Eleven Facts about Jesus and His Mother (Mary) in the Islamic Teachings*.

those claiming to be his followers. The same applies to Buddhism, which was named after Gautama Buddha; Confucianism, named after Confucius; Hinduism, named after 'Hind' (the Persian word for India); and so on.

Followers of Christianity and Buddhism are called 'Christians' and 'Buddhists' because they worship Christ and Buddha, respectively. However, Muslims cannot be called 'Muhammadans' because Muslims do not worship Muhammad (bpuh); they worship Allah and submit to Him alone. In fact, this phenomenon of naming an ideology after a person has become so common that many mistakenly label Islam as 'Mohammedanism', although Muslims have never used, nor do they accept, such a label.

9. THE SIX ARTICLES OF ISLAMIC FAITH

Islamic belief is based on six fundamental articles of faith.

9.1 Belief in Allah

This includes the following beliefs:

- Belief in Allah's existence: The existence of humankind and the entire universe is not a mere accident or the product of chance. The universe, and everything in it, manifests and points to the certainty of there being a Creator.
- Belief that Allah is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Owner of the universe and its contents, the Provider of everything, the Giver of life and the Causer of death.
- Belief that Allah is the only One Who has the right to be worshipped.
- Allah has revealed, both in His final revelation, the Quran, and through his Prophet's teachings, ninety-nine names and numerous attributes. They offer some insight into the absolutely unique, wondrous and perfect nature of Allah. The most frequently used name is Allah, which means 'the Worshipped'. Some of those attributes are: the Everlasting, All-Powerful, All-Knowing, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, Self-Sufficient and Self-Sustaining. Allah Almighty is above all comprehension, and He does not resemble His creation, as He has said in the Quran:

{…There is nothing like unto Him…} *(Quran 42: 11)*

{Say: He is Allah, [Who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent.}

(Quran 112: 1-4)

He is the most Rich, free of all needs. He has said in the Quran:

{And I did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship Me. I do not want from them any provision, nor do I want them to feed Me. Indeed, it is Allah who is the [continual] Provider, the firm possessor of strength.} *(Quran 51: 56-58)*

Allah's ninety-nine names and attributes have all been mentioned in the Quran and the statements of the Prophet (bpuh).

9.2 Belief in the angels

Angels are creatures created by Allah for specific functions. They are normally invisible and have no free will; they do as Allah commands them. They should not be worshipped. The angel Gabriel (pbuh) was responsible for conveying the revelation to the prophets. Two angels are assigned to every human being to record their good and evil deeds. Another angel accompanies each human being, encouraging him or her to do good deeds. Others blow the human spirit into the foetus four months after conception, and still others take the human spirit at the time of its

death, by Allah's permission. There are other angels that have various responsibilities.[18]

There are two main points of difference between the Islamic and Christian views of angels. In Islamic teachings, angels are noble and free of sin, yet righteous Muslims hold a greater status in the eyes of Allah. The angels were commanded to bow to Adam (pbuh) due to his superior knowledge, and they all did as they were commanded. Christians, on the other hand, believe that angels are of two kinds: good/obedient and evil/disobedient. That is how they justify their belief that Satan is a 'fallen angel'—an evil angel who disobeyed God.

According to Islamic belief, both angels and human beings are creatures of Allah, and both are obliged to worship Him. Angels have no choice, though; they worship Allah and never disobey Him, so they commit no sins. Thus, the second main point of difference between the Christian and Islamic views of angels is that of free will. Whereas angels have no free will, human beings do, so humans might choose to obey Allah, to be sinful, or to follow some commandments while disobeying others.

9.3 Belief in the scriptures

This article of faith refers to belief in all the scriptures as revealed in their original form by Allah to His messengers. Revealed scriptures form the

[18] For more detail, see al-Uthaymeen, *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islaam*.

enlightenment which the messengers received to show their people the right path of Allah. All the revealed books call to the worship of Allah alone, and they forbid the worship of anything in place of, or in addition to, Him. They contain guidance for humankind in all aspects of life. They define right and wrong, and they offer human beings a complete system of beliefs and practices to govern all their affairs. The Creator alone knows best what is beneficial for His creation and what is not. Thus, the divine laws contained in those scriptures command and prohibit various acts and substances in order to protect the human spirit, human body, and human society from harm. Human beings need to abide by Allah's commandments, as documented in His revealed books, in order to fulfil their potential by living a righteous life.

The original texts of the revealed books do not differ from each other in their main doctrinal principles. However, due to the differences among nations in terms of time and place, there were some differences in the practical teachings (laws) of the scriptures, according to the wisdom of Allah. Their basic message, however, remains the same.

Muslims believe in the previous books as mentioned in the Quran: the Scripture of Abraham (pbuh), the Torah of Moses (pbuh), the Psalms of David (pbuh), and the Gospel of Jesus (pbuh). The following verse from the noble Quran emphasizes the fact that belief in all the previous scriptures sent by Allah is an integral part of the Islamic belief system:

{Say [O believers]: We have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the descendants and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.} *(Quran 2: 136)*

Long before the coming of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh), all of these scriptures had been either lost or irrevocably corrupted by later generations, over the centuries, with myths, superstitions, idolatry, and irrational philosophical beliefs. The existing forms of those scriptures contain contradictions and hence cannot be described as Allah's revelation.

The Bible, for example, is composed of many books written by various authors. The scripture that was revealed to Jesus (pbuh) has undergone so many changes that today we have the four well-known Gospels instead of one Gospel.

These were written between 40 and 115 years after Jesus (peace be upon him) had left and are based on documents that have been lost. The Gospel according to Mark was the first one written in Rome, at least 40 years after the disappearance of Jesus (peace be upon him). The Gospel according to Matthew was written in the Greek Language about 90 years after Christ. The Gospel according to Luke was written in Greece approximately 80 years after Christ. These three Gospels are called Synoptic because they originate from the same lost document and they have a lot in common. The Gospel according to John, on the other hand, has deep differences with

the Synoptic Gospels. It is in this Gospel of John where the Divinity and pre-existence of Jesus (peace be upon him) was mentioned, even though Jesus himself never claimed this. This Gospel was written between the years 110 and 115 CE.[19]

Analysis of these Gospels reveals the following:

1. There exist no written documents dating from the period of Jesus' lifetime that record his sayings, actions or lectures.
2. The Gospels were written 40-115 years after Jesus' 'disappearance' and were based on documents that have since been lost. As a consequence, there was manipulation of the content.
3. The historical record of the Gospels points to the fact that they were written by people who never knew, saw, heard, or met Jesus. (They are named as Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, although their actual identities are not known.) What they narrated as the Gospels was actually based on what they heard from the preceding generations. This points to the fact that the original message revealed to Jesus, which was in his possession, did not exist later (after his ascension). Otherwise, there would be no need for people to write it.
4. The Gospels were written in Greek, whereas Jesus (pbuh) spoke Aramaic; since they do not record his original speech, they cannot be the words of Allah.

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[19] Abdul Razak, *Study Guide, Comparative Study — Islam and Christianity*.

5. For at least 100 years after the Gospels were written, they did not have any canonical authority. During this time, writers from different sects changed them in order to suit their own agendas.
6. The clearest evidence of biblical distortion is the revision of the Bible to the extent that every edition is different from the previous one.
7. There is a lack of authentication in documenting the original text of the Bible.
8. The present Gospels, seen as a whole, are full of contradictions.[20]

These factors have been brought up here in order to demonstrate that the Gospel of Jesus (pbuh), meaning his original message that was revealed by Allah, has not reached us in its original form. It can be affirmed that the four Gospels included in today's Bible cannot be considered equivalent, or even similar, to the inspired message given to Jesus (pbuh). Based on these historical facts, these four Gospels should be treated as historical writings, like the other books in the New Testament, not as the true scripture (word of Allah) that was revealed to Jesus.[21]

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[20] Source for points 1-7: Caraballo, *My Great Love for Jesus Led Me to Islam*, 14-15.

[21] At one time, there were a number of Gospels, but only four are accepted as part of today's Bible. Some scholars believe that these were chosen by the First Council of Nicaea, convened by the Roman Emperor Constantine in 325 CE.

Distortion of the Old Testament

Moving to the Old Testament texts, there are many verses that describe the Lord with weak and negative attributes. Some of them are even curses! This clearly indicates that the Old Testament cannot be the word of God because the Lord would not undermine Himself in the books He revealed to His people. The Lord is perfect, and hence His book must be perfect and free from contradictions.

In the twelve passages cited below, a series of nine examples prove conclusively to the sincere researcher that the current Old Testament is not the true Old Testament, the revelation that was in Jesus' hands. It is the word of 'men', not the word of 'God', the Lord.[22]

1. Here it says that the Lord acted as if he had slept and drunk wine! If this verse is true, then who controlled the universe while He acted this way?

   Then the Lord **awoke** as from sleep, like a strong man shouting because of **wine.** (Psalm 78:65)

2. Here it says that the Lord will not hear. This is not an appropriate characteristic for Allah.

   Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you **will not hear**? (Habakkuk 1:2)

3. Here it says that the Lord forgets.

   How long, O Lord, Will you **forget** me forever? (Psalm 13:1)

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[22] The great researcher Ahmed Deedat had a book titled *50,000 Errors in the Bible*, which is available online.

4. Here the Bible says that the Lord was not strong enough to displace some people because their chariots were made of iron.

   And the Lord was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, but **he could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron**. (Judges 1:19)

5. Here it attributes more negative characteristics to the Lord.

   Therefore will I lament and howl: I will go **stripped and naked**: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and a mourning like the ostriches. (Micah 1:8)

6. These two verses say that the Lord got tired after creating the heavens and earth and then had to rest. This attribute fits the human being, not the Lord, Who is the Most Strong.

   …In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day **he rested** and was refreshed. (Exodus 31:17)

   And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and **he rested** on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. (Genesis 2:2)

But the following verse contradicts the previous two verses:

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. **He does not faint**

or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. (Isaiah 40:28)

7. Here it says that the Lord will sound the trumpet. Is this fit for the Lord?

   …The Lord God **will sound the trumpet** and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. (Zechariah 9:14)

8. Here it implies that the Lord has failed and is hurt.

   For thus says the Lord: "Behold, I am slinging out the inhabitants of the land at this time, and I will bring distress on them, that they may feel it." Woe is me because of my hurt! My wound is grievous. But I said, "Truly this is an affliction, and I must bear it." My tent is destroyed, and all my cords are broken; my children have gone from me, and they are not; there is no one to spread my tent again and to set up my curtains. (Jeremiah 10:18-20)

9. Psalm 89:38-46 describes the Lord acting badly against Jesus!

   38 But now you have cast off and rejected; you are full of wrath against your anointed.

   39 You have renounced the covenant with your servant; you have defiled his crown in the dust.

   40 You have breached all his walls; you have laid his strongholds in ruins.

41 All who pass by plunder him; he has become the scorn of his neighbours.

42 You have exalted the right hand of his foes; you have made all his enemies rejoice.

43 You have also turned back the edge of his sword, and you have not made him stand in battle.

44 You have made his splendor to cease and cast his throne to the ground.

45 You have cut short the days of his youth; you have covered him with shame.

46 How long, O Lord? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire?

10. Here is the cursing of a prophet (Balaam) in the Bible! Could this be the word of God? Could it happen that God sends a prophet and then rebukes him for his transgressions and then accuses him of not being in his right mind?

    but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. (2 Peter 2:16)

11. Genesis 19:30-38 narrates a very wicked story about a prophet (Lot). According to this, his daughters got him drunk and then had sexual relations with him while he was unaware of it; they both bore children as a result. Even a very indecent person would not do this.

12. Here is a Biblical curse for the Prophet Solomon:

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done. (1 Kings 11: 1-6)

13. There are hundreds of verses in the Bible which are against logic and common sense.

Biblical proofs of the Bible's distortion

The Old Testament itself clearly testifies that it was altered by humans. God (Allah) is quoted as saying:

How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us'? But behold, **the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie**. (Jeremiah 8:8)

Who distorted the Bible (Old and New Testaments)?

Dr Bilal Philips has explained:

> About five years after the end of Jesus' ministry, a young rabbi by the name of Saul of Tarsus, who claimed to have seen Jesus in a vision, began to change Jesus' way. Paul (his Roman name) had considerable respect for Roman philosophy and he spoke proudly of his own Roman citizenship. His conviction was that non-Jews who became Christians should not be burdened with the Torah in any respect. The author of Acts 13:39 quotes Paul as saying: And by him every one that believes is freed from everything which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses. It was primarily through the efforts of Paul that the Church began to take on its non-Jewish character. Paul wrote most of the New Testament letters (epistles), which the Church accepts as the official doctrine and inspired Scripture. These letters do not preserve the Gospel of Jesus or even represent it, instead, Paul transformed the teachings of Christ into a Hellenic (Greco-Roman) philosophy.[23]
>
> Based on these facts, it can easily be concluded that the Bible in its present form is no more than a collection of historical books written by various writers over many years. The accounts of the life of Jesus were written after his ascension, by men who never met him. (They are named as Mark, Matthew, Luke and John, although their actual

[23] Philips, *The True Message of Jesus Christ*, 52-53.

identities are not known.) These are partial accounts, which contradict each other and have no authentication. The current version(s) of the Bible does not represent the original revelations and cannot be described as the word of God (Allah).

Many Christians have found that when they do research to discover the true teachings of God, the Bible cannot answer their questions. Dr David Liepert is a Canadian physician who began learning about Islam in order to convince Muslim co-workers that his Christian beliefs represented the truth. As he combed through the Bible, however, he was surprised to find that it did not contain the evidence for his beliefs that he had assumed was there. After a great deal of soul-searching, and extensive research into Islam, he realized that it had the strongest evidence supporting it, and he embraced Islam as the true religion. His story is described in his book *Choosing Faith*.

Although the original revelations were not preserved and have been replaced with the current Bible (including the four Gospels attributed to Luke, Matthew, John, and Mark), the Old and New Testaments still contain some remnants of the original truth. The Quran confirms these parts, because it confirms the truth and denies all falsehood. Islamic teachings set out a criterion for either accepting or rejecting passages from the Bible, as described in the following verse:

{And We have revealed to you [O Muhammad] the book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the scripture and as a criterion over it...} *(Quran 5: 48)*

This verse emphasizes two main aspects of the Quran:

1) The Quran confirms only those teachings or passages of the previous scriptures whose meaning have remained intact.
2) The Quran is the final, complete, authoritative and authentic revelation from Allah. It is the final arbiter and the only criterion to correct any inaccuracy or misinterpretation which might have occurred in the transmission of scriptures throughout the ages. It helps us to discover, expose, and disclose human additions to, or interpolations of, previous revelations. Indeed, one of the names of the Quran is *al-Furqan* (the criterion which distinguishes between right and wrong, truth and falsehood).

It follows, therefore, that Muslims have no reason to reject the essence of any passage in the Bible if such a passage is confirmed by the Quran. For example, we read in the New Testament a reiteration of one of the Ten Commandments:

Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: **The Lord our God, the Lord is one**. (Mark 12:29)

Muslims who read this passage in the Bible can find no objection to its essence. After all, the Quran confirms:

{Say: He is Allah, [Who is] One.} *(Quran 112: 1)*

{They have certainly disbelieved who say, “Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary,” while the Messiah has said, “O Children of Israel, worship Allah, **my Lord and your Lord**.” Indeed, he who associates others with Allah – Allah has forbidden him Paradise, and his refuge is the fire. And there are not for the wrongdoers any helpers.}

(Quran 5: 72)

If, however, Muslims read in the Bible (or in other previous scriptures, for that matter) accusations of major moral sins levied against great prophets, or doctrines which are totally negated in the Quran, they can accept only the Quranic version as the original unadulterated truth, revealed by Allah.

Distorting revelations is the biggest sin

The Quran has emphasized, in more than one verse, that distorting Allah’s revelation is a severe sin.

{So woe to those who write the ‘scripture’ with their own hands, then say: This is from Allah—in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn.} *(Quran 2: 79)*

An important note

It should be noted that those who followed the scriptures in their pure and unadulterated forms, and then died before hearing the message of Islam, are

considered to be on the right religion; they will have nothing to fear on the Day of Judgement.

Revelation of the Quran

Following the distortion of the previous scriptures, Allah, the Most Compassionate, did not leave human beings to go astray without an unadulterated reference. Indeed, He revealed the Quran as the final revelation to humankind, and He promised to preserve it for all time. It is the word of Allah, which He revealed to Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) through the angel Gabriel (pbuh). It was revealed in parts (fragments) of different lengths over a period of twenty-three years. Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) recited the revelation to his Companions, who wrote it down during his lifetime on palm leaves, parchment, animal bones (the shoulder-blades of camels made a good writing surface), and flat stones. When he recited it to them, he indicated precisely where each revealed section belonged within the body of the complete revelation. In addition, the Quran was memorized by hundreds of Prophet Muhammad's Companions. One year after the death of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) in 632 CE, the first caliph, Abu Bakr (d. 634 CE, may Allah be pleased with him), instructed the Prophet's Companions to collect the whole Quran in one volume. Later, the third caliph, Uthman (d. 656 CE, may Allah be pleased with him), prepared several copies from the original text and sent them to the major centres of the Islamic civilization. One of these reproductions can still be found in Istanbul, Turkey.

From that time onwards, for more than 1400 years, the same Quranic text has been in use, with the exact same wording, order, and language (Arabic). Not a single word of its 114 chapters, 6200 verses, and approximately 80,000 words has been changed since it was revealed.[24] Indeed, Allah has promised to preserve it forever:

{Indeed, it is We who sent down the Quran and indeed, We will be its guardian.} *(Quran 15: 9)*

Just ponder over the fact that the Quran, in its entirety, is memorized by millions of people, regardless of age, sex, social class, or ethnicity! It is the only book that has been thus preserved, not only on the shelf but in the hearts of humankind.

The Quran supersedes all previous scriptures. Allah has said to Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) about it:

{And We have revealed to you [O Muhammad] the Book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the scripture and as a criterion over it…} *(Quran 5: 48)*

An essential point to understand about the Quran is that it is a miracle in terms of both its revelation and its content. Since the time of its revelation, there have been those who denied the divine and miraculous nature of the Quran, saying that Muhammad (bpuh) was either taught by others or that he wrote it by himself! In order to

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[24] This refers to the original Arabic Quran. There are differences in its translations because they are merely interpretations of its meaning by different individuals.

counteract this claim, Allah has presented a challenge to the whole of humankind:

{And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our slave [Muhammad], then produce a chapter the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful.}

(Quran 2: 23)

This is one of the prophecies which the Quran accurately foretold, for no one, from the time of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) until this day, has been able to produce the like of one chapter or even one verse of the Quran. As such, Muslims do not need any other scriptures to base their faith on, either fully or partially. The Quran remains clear and easily understood by anyone who has a good command of the Arabic language, and even when the meanings of its words are translated into any of the world's other languages, all of its legal injunctions and instructions are clear.

The entire Quran is a proclamation of monotheism

1. Some of the verses inform us about Allah: His names, attributes, acts, and speech. Those verses indicate the Oneness of Allah with respect to His most excellent names, essence, and perfect attributes.
2. Other verses point to the necessity of worshipping Allah alone, without any associate or partner, and of renouncing the worship of anything other than Him. These verses indicate the focus of worship and the

necessity for people to single out their Lord in their intentions, when requesting His help and when turning to Him in repentance, for example.

3. The Quran also contains injunctions and prohibitions; doing something that has been enjoined or refraining from what has been prohibited is the fulfilment and perfection of the affirmation of the Oneness of Allah.
4. The Quran includes stories and information about prophets and other righteous people of true and sincere belief. It tells about their immediate rewards in the life of this world as well as the immense rewards reserved for them in the hereafter.
5. The Quran also contains stories about those who associate partners with Allah. It describes their punishment in this life and the punishment they are promised in the hereafter. These are the just deserts for those who deviate from the affirmation of Allah's Oneness.

The Prophet's teachings

The teachings of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) are the second source of Islamic knowledge, after the noble Quran. They explain and elaborate on the Quranic verses. They also explain, in minute detail, the manner of worship as performed by the Prophet (bpuh). The Prophet's statements provide further clarification and details as to how to fulfil what Allah has ordered and refrain from what He has forbidden. These teachings have been meticulously collected and reported by the

Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with all of them).

Preservation of Islamic teachings

Preventing Islamic teachings from alteration does not stop at the preservation of the Quranic text; it is also forbidden to introduce into the Prophet's guidance (by saying or writing) anything that is contrary to its premise, values or teachings.

The Prophet (bpuh) said:

«Whoever introduces into this matter (the Islamic teachings) something that does not belong to it, shall find it rejected.» (Recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

«One of the Prophet's Companions said: The Prophet (bpuh) gave us a highly effective admonition, such that many of us were tearful and felt our hearts shudder.

Someone said to him: O Messenger of Allah! This sounds like the admonition of someone bidding his audience farewell. Please outline for us what you recommend.

The Prophet (bpuh) said: I urge you to always remain conscious of Allah (God-fearing), and to listen to and obey your leaders, even if the leader is an Abyssinian slave. Any of you who lives long will witness much strife and conflict, so hold tight to my way and the way followed by the Rightly-Guided Caliphs.[25] Hold on to it and bite it with your molars (do not let go of it), and steer away from any innovation (in religious affairs and laws), for such innovations are deviations (from the

[25] He meant specifically the four caliphs who came after him.

right path).» (An authentic hadith recorded by Ibn Hibban, Abu Dawood, and Tirmidhi)[26]

Thus, in matters of religion, one is not permitted to change fundamental principles of Islamic teachings. Whatever is contrary to them is wrong and unacceptable. With this strict protection, Islam has been kept as it was revealed, pure from myths and superstitions as well as from changes that reflect the whims of people and leaders.

9.4 Belief in the messengers of Allah

Allah has conveyed His message through prophets and messengers, individual human beings who were selected by Allah to be examples of how the scriptures were to be understood and implemented. Prophets demonstrated practically, for their followers, how they should live in accordance with the law. The way of the prophets is the only way to Allah, because it is the way prescribed by Allah Himself. Without prophets, people would not know Allah, His attributes, or how to worship Him.

The role of the prophets can be summarized as follows:

1. Receive the message from Allah.
2. Deliver this message to the people.
3. Advise people to fear Allah and abide by His commandments.

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[26] hadith: a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers.

4. Advise people who have deviated, disobeyed Allah, or worshipped anything or anyone other than Him, to repent and to obey and worship Him only.
5. Inform people about the fundamental aspects of faith.
6. Teach detailed religious and moral tenets to their followers.
7. Be a model for their people, and lead them to eternal paradise.

Allah, the Exalted, has sent a prophet or prophets to every nation; their duty was to convey the message that He alone should be worshipped and that worshipping anything instead of or along with Him is false and unacceptable. The Quran and Hadith[27] have mentioned twenty-seven prophets (see Illustration 1), while indicating that many others existed but were not mentioned by name. The first of these prophets was Adam, and the last was Muhammad (bpuh). May Allah's mercy and peace be upon all the prophets.

Every prophet was sent to a specific people and a specific era. For example, in the present day Bible, Jesus says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 15:24)

Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) was an exception in that he was sent as the last and final messenger until the hour of judgement. The proofs that Muhammad (bpuh) was a messenger of Allah are

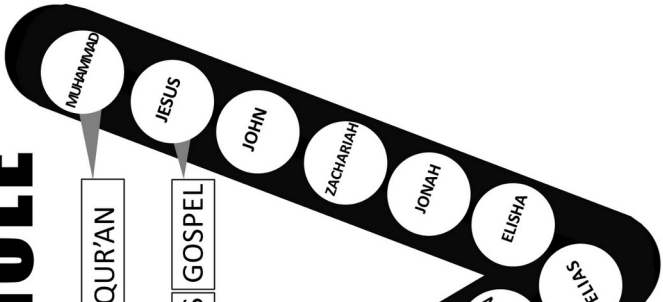
[27] Hadith: the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) that with the Quran form the basis of Islamic law.

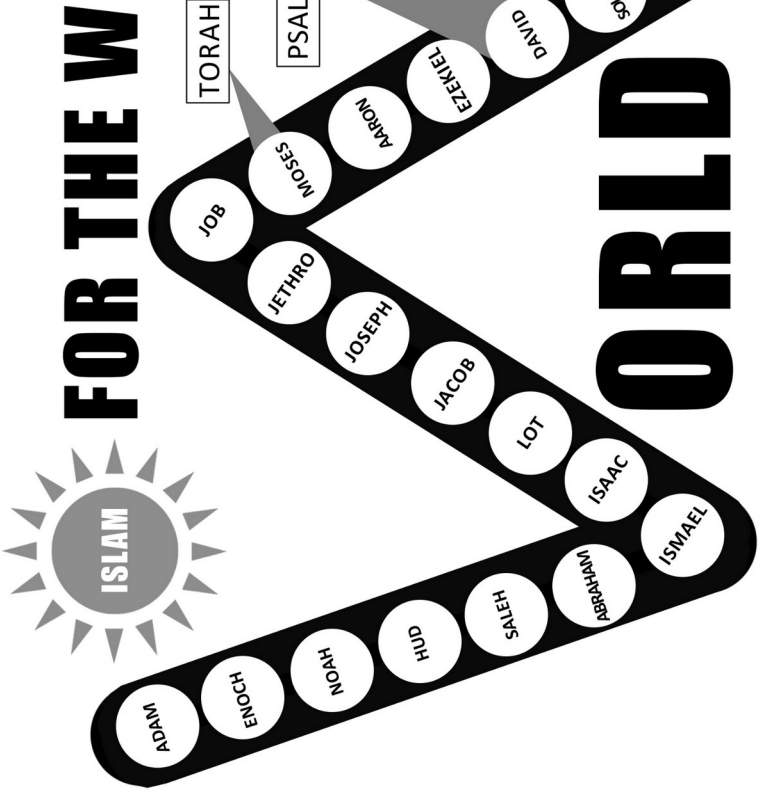
innumerable, and all have been mentioned in detailed biographical material about his life. The greatest proof is the miracle of the Quran, which could not have been written by any human and could not have been conveyed by anyone other than a Messenger of Allah (bpuh).

Indeed, the books of the Bible mention the coming of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh), in spite of the changes which have been introduced in their content.[28]

The Quran and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) relate, with reverence, the lives of many of these prophets. Prophet Muhammad (bpuh), the last prophet, remains the absolute example for his followers, and his teachings were further elucidated through the practice of his Rightly-Guided successors. The Prophet (bpuh) continuously encouraged his followers to follow his way, and he warned against conflict over Islamic principles and values. This was to ensure that his followers would not deviate from the right path, as did the followers of previous prophets.

Prophet Muhammad's followers owe him two things: obedience and love.





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our families, or for our wider community, whether it is the Muslim community in general or humanity at large. He has only prohibited what is harmful or of no benefit, such as adultery, gambling, drinking alcohol, lying, being disrespectful to parents, and so on. In many statements, the Prophet (bpuh) prohibited satanic ways such as these because these tend to pull a person away from the right path.

Good believers reach a state of mind in which their desires and pleasures in this life are in line with what Allah wants from them. Every individual should be obedient to Allah and His Prophet (bpuh) and should strictly observe the instructions from Allah. One’s faith develops and grows through following Islamic teachings and performing acts of

worship, whereas it decays and suffers from a spiritual loss if these teachings and acts of worship are abandoned.[29]

Loving the Prophet (bpuh)

Islam teaches that loving the Prophet is part of the Islamic faith. The Prophet (bpuh) has been quoted as saying:

«None of you is a true believer unless I am dearer to him than his parents, his children, and all other people.»

(Recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (bpuh) also said:

«There are three qualities which are certain to give anyone the sweetness of faith: to love Allah and His Messenger more than anyone else, to love a person for no purpose other than for Allah's sake, and to hate to relapse into disbelief after Allah has saved him from it as much as one would hate to be thrown into the fire.»

(Recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

We are required to love Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) more than all others (except Allah) because it was through him that we learned Who Allah is, along with His attributes, our position in relation to Him, what He wants from us, and how to worship Him. The Prophet (bpuh) has guided us, through practical examples, along the way; following him is certain to earn us Allah's acceptance and the ultimate bliss. He has spared us the worst calamity

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[29] Compiled from Caraballo, *My Great Love for Jesus Christ Led Me to Islam*.

that can ever befall anyone, which is incurring Allah's anger and punishment. He sacrificed everything— his health, his wealth, and his whole life—to deliver Allah's message to us. If we realize all this, how can we not love him more than we love ourselves and all others?

We love Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) because he was, as described in the Quran, a 'mercy for all nations'. His compassion extended to all, whether they were friends and enemies. Consider this: his enemies often had a change of heart and became his beloved Companions and followers. They embraced Islam, saying that his character proved he was a true Messenger of Allah (bpuh).

It should be noted that we must love Allah more than we love the Prophet (bpuh); the Prophet (bpuh) comes only after Allah. Loving Allah, the Prophet (bpuh), and his followers is an act of worship for which we will be rewarded. The reverse is also true: hating Allah or His Prophet (bpuh) will expel us from the bounds of Islam. Correspondingly, hating those who hate Allah or the Prophet (bpuh) is part of Islamic belief, for which we will be accounted and rewarded.

It needs to be clarified here that the emotion of 'hate' that is referred to in this context is not the commonly known, evil type of hate which is an imperfect human emotion; rather, it is the type of hate that perfects one's faith when directed—in the right measure—against those who take a defiant stance against the Creator and His chosen messengers. It is a lot like the negative feeling

one has towards the actions of a person who defies and abuses his or her elderly parents in an evil manner, or towards the efforts of an outlaw who fights the justice system and spreads fear and corruption in society. It is clear that hating the actions of such individuals is a natural feeling that good people are expected to have. Although Islam teaches love in all its forms, it also instructs faithful believers not to love those who do not love Allah and His messengers, until they change their ways—in which case, they are commanded to love them! In a nutshell, a Muslim loves and hates for Allah's sake. Here is an important fact about this emotion of hate: a Muslim is instructed not to hate anyone for personal reasons. If a Muslim is insulted by anyone, he or she is encouraged to forgive; surely, there is a great difference between hate for the sake of Allah (a well-placed emotion) and hate for self-satisfaction (a destructive emotion). Keep in mind that expressing our feelings of hate or revulsion at the refusal of our fellow human beings to believe in Allah's Oneness and to follow the monotheistic teachings of His prophets should be part of a positive and pro-active approach to those who disbelieve. We pray for them to be guided to the truth; at the same time, we need to work for that and work with them towards that.

The love we should have for the Prophet (bpuh) must be genuine love, not a mere verbal statement. It should be supported and proven by

our obedience, by following his commands and avoiding what he prohibited.

9.5 Belief in the Last Day

Islam teaches that this life is only a test of conduct for each of us, to see whether or not we will follow the commands of Allah. In the hereafter, we all will be resurrected to stand before Allah for a just reckoning of the deeds and actions we performed during our life on this earth. People with good deeds will be generously rewarded and warmly welcomed to Allah's heaven, but those whose records are overwhelmed with bad deeds will be punished and cast into hell. We have been given knowledge of right and wrong, instinctively and through revelation; we must choose our own path in this short life. Our choices in this life will ultimately determine our places in the eternal life to come. Allah has said in the Quran:

{So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.} *(Quran 99: 7-8)*

Belief in the Day of Judgement causes the consciousness of Allah to be implanted in the human heart. It impels individuals and society at large to obey Him sincerely, without any external pressure.

In effect, the hereafter for any individual starts right after his or her soul departs from the body. Shortly after the burial, two angels come to the grave and ask the following three questions (as in a final examination):

Who is your Lord?

What is your religion?

Who is your prophet?

Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) said that the believer (one who believes in all six articles of faith) will not have any difficulty answering these questions correctly, while the unbeliever will not be able to do so. Depending upon the result, the deceased will begin either to suffer or to enjoy his or her stay in the grave, which will either expand (to give comfort to) or contract (to torture) its occupant. (As narrated in hadiths recorded by Bukhari and Ahmad)

9.6 Belief in predestination

This includes the following beliefs:

a) Allah knows everything. His knowledge is not bound by time; the past, present, and future are all known to Him.

b) Everything that takes place is already written in a book called the ‘Preserved Tablet’.

c) Allah has created everything, including our actions, both good and bad. He has commanded us to do good deeds, though, and has forbidden us from doing evil; hence we will be rewarded or punished based on our choice of good or bad actions.

d) Everything that happens in this universe is happening with Allah’s permission, and nothing can take place against His will.

It should be noted that Allah’s prior knowledge is not the same as control; it does not mean that we

human beings have no free will. We choose, but Allah knows in advance what choices we will make and what actions we will take. He merely **allows** us to follow through with our decisions.

10. THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

Worship in Islam is an all-inclusive term encompassing all of the actions and statements that Allah loves and approves of. Every virtuous action that is performed with the intention of carrying out His commandments and seeking His pleasure is considered to be an act of worship. Islam is built on five acts of worship that make up the foundation on which all other deeds rest. These five pillars have a high importance in Islam; learning and practicing them are priorities for every Muslim, whereas everything else can be learned gradually, with patience and dedication. These five pillars stand as the framework of spiritual life, on which the structure of Islam rests:

10.1 The declaration of the two testimonies of faith

"I testify that there is no deity[30] worthy of worship except Allah, and I testify that Muhammad (bpuh) is His slave and messenger."[31] The sincere declaration of this double testimony (also referred to as the testimony of monotheism) and adherence to this teaching automatically brings one into the fold of Islam, and dying while believing it guarantees a place in paradise. That is why this testimony is considered to be the cornerstone of Islam. The acceptance of this belief

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[30] deity: an object of worship.

[31] In Arabic: *Ash-hadu al-la ilaha illa Allah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Abduhu wa Rasooluhu*.

distinguishes the Muslim from the non-Muslim, so all actions depend upon this pillar; good deeds (no matter how great) are of no avail to anyone who does not utter this testimony. On the other hand, there are many actions that contradict this declaration, automatically taking one outside the fold of Islam. The most serious of those acts is worshipping other than Allah, whether through supplication, prayer, or any other act that signifies worship or belief in an entity other than Allah.

10.2 Prayers

Formal prayers are prescribed five times daily as a duty to Allah, the Exalted, at the following times: dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and nightfall. Prayer provides people with regular contact with Allah, which helps them avoid evil. This act of worship compels the believers to remember their Lord night and day, no matter where they are. These prayers take place continuously, so that at any given moment, people are praying somewhere in the world. Muslim males are enjoined to pray in congregation in a mosque, while females are encouraged to pray in their homes, but a Muslim may offer formal prayers almost anywhere as long as the location is clean. Furthermore, it is symbolic of equality among the poor and the rich, the ruler and the subjects, the dark-skinned and the fair-skinned. Human beings from every conceivable background stand together shoulder to shoulder, united in rows, prostrating themselves before Allah. Prayer strengthens the belief in Allah and elevates people to a higher morality. It helps to purify the heart

and to prevent them from giving in to temptation to engage in wrongdoing and evil.

10.3 *Zakah* (obligatory charity)

Every Muslim whose net annual savings are above a certain specified minimum must pay 2.5% of those savings annually to the poor or needy people in the community.[32] Zakah fosters generosity and helps purify the soul of selfishness and greed. Zakah also helps reduce resentment and envy between the poor and the rich members of the society. Islam is a practical religion. Not only does it safeguard the average individual and his or her rights, but it protects the rights of the weaker members of the community as well.

10.4 Fasting the month of Ramadan

In Islam, fasting means abstinence from food, drink, and marital relations from dawn to sunset. It is an annual obligation during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Fasting was imposed on former communities of believers in earlier divine religions. The Quran states that the main purpose of fasting is to help us be more conscious of Allah and more obedient to Him. It teaches sincerity and engenders devotion. It helps us develop a sense of social conscience, patience, self-restraint, willpower, and compassion for needy members of the society.

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[32] There are also different amounts due for livestock, crops, inventory, etc.; the details are beyond the scope of this book.

Someone might ask: Why has Allah, in His wisdom, prescribed fasting for many nations?

The answer is that the purpose of fasting is clearly defined as being for the development of Allah-consciousness (piety) in the believer's heart, since only Allah knows who is actually fasting and who is not. Consequently, the one who is fasting refrains from eating and drinking based on an awareness of Allah. Regular fasting enhances that awareness, which subsequently leads to the implanting of righteousness in the heart of the individual.

As a secondary benefit, fasting is very good for one's health. It purifies the body of toxins; it is a rest from the useless waste cluttering the body. It allows the body to recuperate and heal. It trains the body, as well as the mind, to function with an amount of food that is sufficient. Also, the needs of basic instincts of survival are kept in check, and when the individual is able to control these, other needs are easier to control. In return for this sacrifice, Allah grants the believers great rewards and forgives their sins.

10.5 Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah)

The Hajj is obligatory for every Muslim once in a lifetime, if one can afford it financially and bear it physically. During the Hajj, Muslims from all corners of the world meet in an international congregation dedicated to the worship of Allah. The Hajj lasts for days (not including travel to and from Makkah), during which several million pilgrims perform certain rites in

specific places at specific times; as such, it is a great lesson in patience but also brings magnificent spiritual rewards. The huge gatherings for the Hajj are a reminder of the Day of Judgement, when all of humankind will gather for their reckoning. It emphasizes the belief that all Muslims are brothers and sisters, irrespective of their geographical, cultural, racial or social origins.

11. THE MEANING OF WORSHIP IN ISLAM

The meaning of worship is, simply, total submission and complete obedience to Allah's commandments in belief, intentions, statements, and actions. This is achieved by striving to do what Allah has encouraged, avoiding what He has forbidden, and worshipping Him alone, according to His teachings. This is the true meaning of **worship** of Allah or 'slavery to Allah' in Islam, and this state applies to all of the messengers and true followers of Allah. May He enable all of us to achieve this level of worship.

12. THE MORAL SYSTEM IN ISLAM

Islam has unique moral teachings that call for strengthening the relationship between humans and their Lord, as well as among one another. They also call for us to correct and improve ourselves, both inwardly and outwardly.

12.1 Relationship with the Lord

In the Quran, Allah calls us to correct and strengthen our relationship with Him and to draw close to Him through spiritual and physical acts of worship such as prayer, Hajj, supplication, and charity. In addition, the Quran calls us to seek knowledge about Allah through His names and attributes. This instils fear and awe of the Lord in our hearts and establishes discipline in applying Allah's commands and prohibitions.

The Prophet (bpuh) also instructed us to remember Allah at all times and in every situation. This creates a permanent connection between our Lord and us, and it instils stability, strength and tranquillity in our hearts. It is one means of protecting against evil and vice, since Muslims will be reminded constantly that Allah is watching our every action. The Prophet (bpuh), for example, taught specific invocations to be uttered when going to sleep; before entering the lavatory; before sexual intercourse; while travelling; when in a state of fear; upon entering or leaving one's house; the first thing in the morning and in the afternoon; when afflicted by distress, anxiety, or misfortune;

when burdened by debt or poverty; upon entering a graveyard; when stopping for a rest or setting up camp; and in many other situations.

12.2 Relationships with people in general

The Quran promotes behaviour that strengthens and reinforces social relationships; for example, it places great importance on the role of the family. Treating parents kindly, maintaining good relations with other family members, seeing to the rights and needs of spouses and children and dealing with them with love and mercy, and supporting orphans and the weaker members of society are all obligatory. Conversely, disobeying parents, severing family ties, neglecting or abusing spouses and children, and isolating oneself are all prohibited.

In addition, the Quran teaches that we should treat others with high moral behaviour and noble manners. We are encouraged to smile, forgive, return harm with good, and have patience when dealing with others. Since this high code of moral behaviour can be quite trying, Allah has promised immense rewards for those who achieve it.

The Prophet (bpuh) instructed us to adopt good manners when in gatherings, such as not raising our voices, respecting elders, being gentle with youngsters, and greeting those present by saying *Assalamu alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu* (May the peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you). Islam also demands that we guard our tongues against saying negative things about others, even if what we want to say is true.

Islam also enjoins that agreements and contracts be fulfilled, entrusted items returned, and rulers obeyed. It enjoins noble characteristics just as it forbids vileness, baseness, crime, oppression, hostility, aggression and all other blameworthy and reprehensible qualities.

12.3 Relationships with parents

Islam highly recommends kindness to parents. This command is mentioned eight times in the Quran. In one of the verses, Allah said to Prophet Muhammad (bpuh):

{And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], 'uff', and do not repel them, but speak to them a noble word. And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say: My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small.} *(Quran 17: 23-24)*

«A man asked Prophet Muhammad (bpuh): Whom should I honour most?

The Prophet (bpuh) replied: Your mother.

The man asked: And who comes next?

The Prophet (bpuh) answered: Your mother.

The man inquired again: And who comes next?

The Prophet (bpuh) responded: Your mother.

The man queried again: And who comes next?

The Prophet replied: Your father.»

(Recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

12.4 Relationships with other relatives

Kindness towards relatives has been promoted by most major religions, but Islam takes this aspect to a new dimension. We are obliged to assist our relatives through economic as well as social means. Relatives have specific rights laid out by the Sharia (Islamic law); these are based on the nearness of the blood relationship. This can be seen mostly in the rights of inheritors, which are specifically laid out in the Quran. Certain relatives receive shares of the inheritance, and a Muslim may bequeath up to one-third of the estate to relatives (or others) who are not assigned a share. When it comes to charity, one must fulfil the rights of relatives before donating money to others, so that members of one's own family are not forced to go elsewhere to seek help.

> Muslims must treat all relatives—whether or not they are Muslims—with utmost respect and kindness; they must not boycott their relatives or cut off relations with them. They are encouraged to stay in contact even if these relatives abandon them. Indeed, maintaining family ties is of such great importance that Muslims are rewarded greatly for any good actions that promote this.

12.5 Relationships with neighbours

Islam encourages treating neighbours very kindly. There is a verse in the Quran that sums this all up:

{...and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther

away, the companion at your side, the traveler...} *(Quran 4: 36)*

Also, the Prophet (bpuh) said:

«(The angel) Gabriel continued to urge me to treat neighbours kindly and politely, to the extent that I thought he would order me to make them my heirs.» (Recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (bpuh) also said:

«Anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbour, and anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should entertain guests generously, and anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should say what is good or keep quiet.»

(Recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Remember, kindness to neighbours is rewarded by Allah.

12.6 Food — moral conduct

The Prophet (bpuh) taught many practical good manners, including the virtue of adopting the correct manners for eating and drinking. These include eating with your right hand and being satisfied with the food rather than finding fault with it. If you like the food, you should eat it, but if you have no appetite for it, simply leave it in the dish without criticizing it. This is both out of respect for the blessing of the food and in order to avoid hurting the feelings of the person who has cooked and/or offered it. It is also preferred to eat with others and not alone, either by eating with your family or by inviting a poor person to join you. Say *Bismillah* (In the name of Allah [I start]) before

beginning to eat, and say *Alhamdulillah* (All praise is due to Allah) after the meal, in order to remember the blessing that you have been given and also the One Who provided it. The Prophet (bpuh) prohibited people from blowing on food or drink or breathing onto it, out of respect for others who may be sharing it and to avoid the spread of contagious diseases.

12.7 Hygiene — Islamic moral conduct

Islam also enjoins both physical and spiritual cleanliness. It encourages us to keep our bodies clean, along with our clothes and shoes. Islam has guided Muslims for our own well-being, down to the minute details. For example, we are encouraged to wash thoroughly after using the toilet, to clean the teeth often (especially with the *siwak*, a natural toothbrush), and to shower after having sexual relations.

12.8 Spiritual — Islamic moral conduct

In regard to spiritual purity, the Quran instructs us to straighten and correct our souls and to purify our hearts from spite, malice, jealousy, pride, and inequity. The Quran calls for integrity of the heart and for love, affection, and humility towards people; it instructs us to purify our tongues from lying, backbiting, slander, and insult, and the enormity of such sins is emphasized in many of its verses. Chapter 104 (The Slanderer) is dedicated to slander and backbiting, which should be replaced by truthfulness and softness in speech. Islam encourages unity, so much so that we should give as many excuses as we can for suspected bad behaviour or speech on the part of fellow Muslims. The wealth,

property, and life of a Muslim are held sacred; no one has the right to interfere with these without the individual's express permission.

> We should restrain our eyes from looking at what they are not entitled to (such as the private parts of others), and we should keep our ears from listening to loose and immoral talk, including lewd song lyrics.
>
> The Quran praises and encourages knowledge and criticizes ignorance, saying that it leads to destruction. It commands people to action and dynamism, while prohibiting wasteful talk and laziness.

12.9 Family structure and rights

Islam teaches that children should be born within a legal marriage and that sexual desire should be controlled and contained within these parameters.

> To uphold the family structure and the well-being of society, the Quran prohibits fornication because it is one of the worst assaults on a person's honour and dignity. It can cause disease and produce children who are looked upon by society as 'illegitimate'. Likewise, the Quran forbids everything which leads to fornication, so it prohibits behaviour like looking at pornographic pictures and being alone with members of the opposite sex who are not *mahrams*.[33] It also commands that men lower their gaze and not look

[33] *mahram*: a man with whom marriage is not permitted; for example, a woman's brother or father. Non-mahram men are those whom a woman is permitted to marry.

or stare at women whom they have no right to look at. Muslim women thus enjoy protection and security and can be confident that Muslim men will not even look at them if they are not permitted to. Likewise, women should not gaze at men unlawfully.

12.10 Decency and veiling

With this same reasoning, Islam enjoins morality in behaviour and appearance. Fashions that reduce women to sex objects are not acceptable, and Islamic veiling is a means of protection from unwanted external attention. Allah says in the Quran:

{O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused...}
(Quran 33: 59)

In the privacy of their own homes and in the presence of their husbands, when they will receive only the type of attention they desire, women may wear whatever they wish.

12.11 The rights of the wife

Islam urges men to be kind to their wives. Allah says in the Quran:

{...He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy...} *(Quran 30: 21)*

Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) said:

«The best of you are those who are kindest to their wives.»

(Recorded by Ibn Majah with a sound chain of narration)

Some people are kind in public where everyone is watching, yet they are mean and cruel at home. Islam holds Muslims accountable even in this situation, where their true nature may be revealed. This is the true test of moral behaviour.

In Islam, the wife retains her independent legal status and family name. She is not the property of her husband in any way, but she has many rights due from him, as he does from her.

The husband must give his wife a gift at the time of marriage, and this is hers to keep even if she is later divorced. The wife does not give a dowry to the husband, and she is never obliged to act as a co-provider for the family, although she may do so voluntarily. It is the husband's sole responsibility to support his family financially. Islam gives women (whether married, divorced, or single) the right to inherit and own property and to conduct business.

12.12 Polygyny

Polygyny (a man's having more than one wife) is permitted in Islam, especially to alleviate social problems such as the plight of orphans and widows who need support. It is also a way to safeguard honesty and matrimonial trustworthiness (especially within the family) for those who have a desire or need for more than one sexual partner; instead of having an extramarital affair, the man is required to take

responsibility for his actions. Islam limits polygyny to a maximum of four wives at one time, and it requires the husband to treat them equally, caring for his wives financially and emotionally in the exact same manner. It should be noted that if a woman is unhappy in this situation, and she fears that she will be unable to fulfil her responsibilities to her husband as well as to Allah, she can opt out of the marriage. A man is not allowed to force his wife to stay married.

12.13 Divorce rules

Islam is a religion of moderation. Although divorce is allowed when necessary, family unity is encouraged. For example, in the event of a divorce, the two spouses are encouraged to bring arbitrators from their family members to help reconcile them. Islam discourages divorce, yet it recognizes the rights of both partners to end their matrimonial relationship if circumstances dictate it. Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) said:

«A believing man should not hate a believing woman. If he dislikes one of her traits, he will be pleased with another.»

(Recorded by Muslim)

Therefore Islam is realistic about the option of divorce, but it also encourages attempts to resolve any conflicts and hold the marriage together.

12.14 Protection of life

The Quran also calls for the protection and sanctity of human life, specifically mentioning that the taking of an innocent life is one of the worst and most hideous

crimes. The Prophet (bpuh) forbade breaking the bones of a dead person, so what about the taking of an innocent life? The Quran prescribes ‘a life for a life’ and ‘an eye for an eye’ for all killings and injuries (large or small) respectively, unless the victims or their families agree to accept financial compensation instead.

12.15 Protection of property

The Quran declares that a person’s property and wealth are safe and inviolable; therefore, it prohibits theft, bribery, usury, and deception. It calls for moderation in spending; hence it forbids extravagance, lavishness, and squandering money, while at the same time forbidding the hoarding and amassing of wealth. It calls for balance; people should neither be greedy, stingy, and covetous nor extravagant and wasteful. It encourages people to seek their livelihoods and provisions through lawful activities that bring financial or material benefit to all parties concerned, such as buying, selling, and leasing.

12.16 Animal rights

The Prophet (bpuh) ordered that animals be treated fairly and with kindness, instructing that they should be fed and given water. He promised that such actions would be rewarded on the Day of Resurrection. He also instructed that they should not be made to carry a burden more than they can bear, tormented or caused undue suffering, or killed (unless they were harmful). If an animal is to be slaughtered as food, it should not be

slaughtered in front of other animals since this would cause them anguish.

12.17 Maintaining health

Islam promotes good health and therefore commands that only wholesome and nutritious food be eaten, and eaten in moderation. Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) warned against overeating, saying:

«No man fills a container worse than his stomach. A few morsels that keep his back upright are sufficient for him. If he has to, then he should keep one-third for food, one-third for drink, and one-third for his breathing.» (A sound hadith recorded by Tirmidhi)

Islam prohibits the consumption of all harmful food and drink such as pork, carrion, tobacco, alcohol and other intoxicants (mind-altering substances), and so forth.

{He has only forbidden to you **dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine**, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.} *(Quran 2: 173)*

In the past, pork was known to carry the risk of trichinosis, a disease caused by parasitic roundworms usually found in undercooked pork. Today, some consider this risk to be low, since food safety standards are more advanced, but in fact, pork still may be harmful. In its January 2013 issue, *Consumer Reports* published an article

titled, “Pork Chops and Ground Pork Contaminated with Bacteria,” which began:

> Our analysis of pork-chop and ground-pork samples from around the U.S. found that yersinia enterocolitica, a bacterium that can cause fever, diarrhea, and abdominal pain, was widespread. Some samples harbored other potentially harmful bacteria, including salmonella...
>
> Some of the bacteria we found in 198 samples proved to be resistant to antibiotics commonly used to treat people. The frequent use of low-dose antibiotics in pork farming may be accelerating the growth of drug-resistant “superbugs” that threaten human health.

The dangers of tobacco are well known. A fact sheet at the World Health Organization website states that tobacco kills six million people a year (including 600,000 from the effects of second-hand smoke, which causes “serious cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, including coronary heart disease and lung cancer”). Up to half of all tobacco users will die from a tobacco-related disease.

{O you who have believed, indeed, **intoxicants**, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone altars [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful.} *(Quran 5: 90)*

As for alcohol, its dangers are also well documented. The World Health Organization’s fact sheet on alcohol explains that, “Worldwide, 3.3 million deaths every year result from harmful use of alcohol, this represent [*sic*] 5.9% of all deaths.”

Alcohol is also described as “a causal factor in more than 200 disease and injury conditions,” including “a range of mental and behavioural disorders, other noncommunicable conditions as well as injuries” and infectious diseases. Current medical advice often refers to “moderate drinking” as being safe for some people, and news reports even cite some benefits from “moderate” drinking. Allah addressed this argument when He informed us:

{They ask you about wine and gambling. Say: In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit...} *(Quran 2: 219)*

Islam also prescribes fasting, which has many benefits for the body, especially for the digestive system.

12.18 Rights of the deceased

Islam maintains respect for a person even after death. When a Muslim dies, he or she must be buried according to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh). The body of the person is washed and perfumed. After that, it is wrapped in an unstitched white cloth shroud, and the body is buried facing the Kaaba (the House of Allah in Makkah, originally built by Prophets Abraham and Ishmael).

We are advised to hold the deceased’s body gently to ensure that its bones do not break. Before and after the burial, people are encouraged to pray that Allah forgive the deceased and admit him or her into paradise. Islam prohibits sitting on or

walking over a grave, in another sign of respect for the dead.

13. ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIONS

One may ask, “If all true religions came with the same message, namely the worship of Allah alone, then why do we find such differences between them?”

The answer is that the original forms of these earlier messages were either lost or distorted by later generations. Consequently, the pure messages of monotheism became polluted with myths, superstitions, idolatry, and irrational philosophical beliefs, to the extent that those religions no longer represent the embodiment of Allah’s revelations. However, Allah, the Compassionate, did not leave human beings without guidance. He ultimately sent Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) to revive the original message and to call human beings back to the correct path: believing in the unique Oneness of Allah and worshipping Him according to His teachings as mentioned in the Quran.

Consequently, Islam is the seal and completion of all religions, the Quran is the seal and completion of all revealed books, and Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) is the seal of all prophets—the final prophet.

14. FEATURES OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS

Allah has made the message of Islam easy to understand and to follow. He annulled some previously prescribed rites and practices, while he affirmed others, according to His wisdom. As a result, the Islamic creed and law are suited to people's spiritual, psychological, social, and economic needs, for all of humankind and for all eras. Islamic teachings have the following unique features:

14.1 Rationality

The truth should be clear and obvious. It should be so simple that anyone is capable of seeing it, and this clarity is the most compelling feature of Islam. One should not have to work through a series of complicated logical proofs in order to derive a fundamental principle, only to arrive at something that he or she is unsure of—yet this is often the case with other religions or philosophies.

14.2 Perfection

Since Allah is perfect, His teachings must also be perfect and free from any contradiction or error. The Quran challenges its readers to find any errors in it if they do not believe it is really from Allah:

{Then do they not reflect upon the Quran? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction.} *(Quran 4: 82)*

Dr Maurice Bucaille, a French surgeon, found many scientific facts mentioned in the Quran that were not known by humans at the time Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) was conveying these verses to those around him. Dr Bucaille wrote, “I could not find a single error in the Quran.”[34] As a result of his findings, he left Christianity and embraced Islam.

14.3 Clarity

Allah is the Most Compassionate. He therefore guides people through clear and simple revelations that are free of myths, superstitions and mysteries.

14.4 Scientific validity and accuracy

It is not surprising to find in the Quran, and in the statements of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh), information that has only recently been discovered by modern science. This indicates that the Quran is the word of Allah and that Muhammad (bpuh) is His messenger. On the other hand, the religious views which the church presented concerning God, the Bible, and the individual’s relation to God forced people into an unfortunate choice: either science or God. Many educated people have concluded that one cannot be a scientist or an educated person and be a true Christian at the same time. Many philosophers and scientists, and the majority of lay people, have lost hope of reconciling religion and science; thus, the ideology of secularism was developed and has since flourished. This dichotomy would not have arisen if the

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[34] Bucaille, *The Quran and Modern Science*.

original scripture that was revealed to Jesus (pbuh) had not been distorted. Islam, the pure religion, raises no contradictions whatsoever between religion and science. This is naturally obvious because both religion and true scientific knowledge are from the same source: Allah, the Exalted, who does not contradict Himself.[35]

14.5 Prophetic fulfilment

Many of the events prophesied in the Quran and in the Prophet's statements have come to pass. This is further proof that Islam is not a man-made religion, because it would be unimaginable for an uneducated man who was living isolated from other civilizations to make up such prophecies; they must have been revealed to him by Allah.

14.6 Moderation

In Islam, there is no conflict between spiritual and worldly life. Rather, it provides a balance among all aspects of human life, taking into account the needs and wants of individuals and society. Therefore, secularism, materialism, monasticism, and extreme asceticism are all rejected by Islam, which provides a middle way to achieve harmony and balance between the spiritual and material needs of people. This is why Allah has called the Muslim nation a:

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[35] For more information on the many scientific facts that are referenced in the Quran, see *The Quran and Modern Science* by Dr Maurice Bucaille and *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam* by I. A. Ibrahim (available online at www.islam-guide.com).

{...just community [moderate nation]...} *(Quran 2: 143)*

14.7 Comprehensiveness

Islamic teachings provide people with definite guidelines to follow in all aspects of life: spiritual, individual, social, moral, political, economic, and so on.

14.8 Uniqueness

Some have claimed that the Quran is man-made; Allah challenges them to:

{...produce a chapter the like thereof...} *(Quran 2: 23)*

> Indeed, the entire Quran—its language, its elegance, its miraculous nature—is unparalleled. The ancient non-Muslim Arabs tried to construct a verse yet failed, even though their language and poetry were very highly developed in that era. Even many recent non-Muslim scholars admit that the Quran is one of the greatest books known to humankind. This point ultimately leads to the fact that Muhammad (bpuh)—the illiterate—was a true prophet to whom the Quran was revealed.

14.9 Justice

All of humankind descended from one man and one woman (Adam and Eve). Islam teaches that the criterion by which all human beings are judged is righteousness, not the colour of their skin or their status in society. In the view of Allah, the best person

is the most righteous. A verse of the glorious Quran reads:

{…Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you…} *(Quran 49: 13)*

15. ISLAM, THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION

Islam is a universal message to all of humankind, for all times until the Day of Judgement. Whereas every other prophet was sent to his own people, and for a limited time period, Muhammad (bpuh) was sent for everyone: male or female, rich or poor, Arab or non-Arab, slave or freeborn. Islam can be practiced anywhere on the earth; it is not tied to locality or culture. Prophet Jesus' mission was limited to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 15:24) Therefore, if you are not from the tribes of Israel (the descendants of the twelve sons of Prophet Jacob) and you are a Christian, then you are following a religion and a message which were not meant for you. This means you are not on the right track!

16. WHY ISLAM?

Every person should revert to Islam because it is the birthright of every person and the original imprint on every human soul at birth.

Every person should revert to Islam because Allah has sealed and superseded all previous messages with Islam. Allah has mentioned to all people:

{…This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion…}

(Quran 5: 3)

Every person should revert to Islam because people in every era must worship their Lord (Allah) according to the law prescribed by Him as revealed to His Prophet (bpuh). The tribes of Israel, for example, were ordered to worship Allah according to the law of Moses. When Prophet Jesus was sent to them, they were ordered to worship Allah according to what was prescribed in the Gospel. Then when Allah sent Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) with the message of Islam to all people, it became incumbent on all people, **the tribes of Israel and all others**, to enter Islam.

After all, what could be more serious than the rejection of the religion which the Creator and Sustainer of everything has enjoined upon all people? Indeed, this is the greatest injustice committed by human beings. It is sad but true that if a person dies in this state, he or she will be

punished and cast into the hellfire to live there for eternity. This concept has been emphasized hundreds of times in the Quran and in the statements of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh). Allah has mentioned:

{And whoever desires other than Islam as religion—never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the hereafter, will be among the losers.}

(Quran 3: 85)

Also, Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) said:

«Whoever among the Christians and Jews hears of me, does not follow what I have brought, and dies in this state will be among the inhabitants of hellfire.» (Recorded by Muslim)

Note that Allah was reported to have said in a prophecy, “And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.” (Deuteronomy 18:19)

Since it has been proven that the prophet referred to here is Muhammad (bpuh), this means that whoever believes in the Bible must believe in this prophet and in what this prophet says; otherwise, they will be called to account for that. After they realize who this prophet is, it follows logically that they must adhere to his teachings.

There are those who may not accept Islam because they think that becoming a Muslim means turning one’s back on all the previous prophets sent by Allah. This is a false concept because of the following:

Firstly, belief in all the prophets of Allah is a pillar of Islamic faith; hence, one is not a believing Muslim unless he or she believes in Jesus, Moses and all the other prophets (peace be upon them all).

Secondly, belief in the prophets is a part of what each prophet taught. (In other words, every prophet called his people to believe in the prophet who would come after him and to follow that prophet whenever he appeared.) Therefore, rejecting a prophet amounts to rejecting his predecessor.

Thirdly, rejecting any prophet amounts to rejecting the One Who sent him: Allah.

Fourthly, Islam promises great rewards to the followers of previous faiths if they believe in Islam in addition to their previous faith.

The Messenger of Allah (bpuh) said:

«Three people have a double reward: a person from the People of the Scriptures (the Jews and the Christians) who believed in his prophet (Jesus or Moses) and then believes in Prophet Muhammad (by embracing Islam)...» (Recorded by Bukhari)

The first reward is for believing in their previous religion (before knowing about Islam); the second reward is for recognizing the truth of Islam and following it.

From the Islamic perspective, the relationships among the prophets are like the relationships among the links in a chain; rejecting one of them amounts to rejecting all of them. Likewise,

becoming a Muslim means having the honour of believing in all the prophets who came before Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) and not turning one's back on any previous prophets.

Finally, we have to accept Islam because Islam has revived the eternal divine teachings that had been either forgotten, lost, or distorted in the previous messages. Islam retains and maintains the practical teachings mentioned in the previous scriptures (as originally revealed), which are part of the birthright of all people until the end of this world.

17. A FINAL CALL TO REASON

A concluding suggestion: consider what everyone has in common. Come, let us reason together:

{Say: O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you—that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah. But if they turn away, then say: **Bear witness that we are Muslims** [submitting to Him].} *(Quran 3: 64)*

In the noble Quran, {People of the Scripture} is the respectful title given to the Jews and the Christians. Muslims are being commanded to invite them with noble and respectful words: O People of the Book, O learned people, O people who claim to be the recipients of divine revelation of a holy scripture, let us gather onto a common platform: that we worship none but Allah, because none but Him is worthy of worship and because He is our Lord and Cherisher, our Sustainer and Evolver, worthy of all praise, prayer and devotion.

These truths are basic and an integral part of any human being's intellect. Sort through the layers of indoctrination that hide this simple fact, and one will be able to see that deep down, every human being retains the simple and obvious concept of Allah. In essence, every human being agrees that there is only One God worthy of worship, One God Who is free of partners, helpers, and anything that is ascribed to Him falsely.

18. THIS IS IT

In this book, you have been shown the right path, and Allah has given you the ability to distinguish right from wrong. He has also given you the freedom of choice as to whether or not to accept the message of Islam. If you accept His call, you will be warmly welcomed into paradise. If you reject it, you will end up with the biggest loss ever imagined: the loss of paradise and the guarantee of dwelling in hellfire for all eternity. Take a moment to comprehend what **eternity** really means. It is a very frightening realization.

To those who have been faithful Christians, you are warmly welcome to embrace Islam because:

- Jesus asked his followers to follow Muhammad (bpuh) whenever he appeared.[36]
- When Jesus comes back before the end of this world, he will follow Muhammad (bpuh) and abide by his teachings.[37]

Yes, since Jesus called his true followers to follow it while he was on the earth, and he will follow Islam when he comes back, all faithful Christians should follow Islam as well.

To those who have been believing Jews, remember that Abraham and Moses surrendered

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[36] See al-Rassi, *The Amazing Prophecies of Muhammad (bpuh) in the Bible: Twenty-Eight Proofs from the Bible of Muhammad's Prophethood*.

[37] See al-Rassi, *Eleven Facts about Jesus and His Mother (Mary) in the Islamic Teachings*.

themselves completely to their Lord, whether they called Him Elohenu, God, or Allah. All pride in ethnicity or ancestry is vain; what will matter in the end is your individual relationship with your Creator. This means total submission: Islam.

To those of other faiths or those who, until now, did not feel that they had any faith at all, consider this message **now**, without any reluctance or hesitation, before it is too late—**before death overtakes you**. It could be soon. Who knows?

19. A WHISPER

Some people are not able to find the truth because of their blind commitment to their beliefs. Their tenacious adherence is usually not based on an intellectual understanding of the teachings but on powerful cultural and emotional influences. Because they were brought up in a particular family or society, they firmly cling to the beliefs of that group, believing that they are upholding the truth.

There are others who are convinced about the religion of Islam and are mentally ready to embrace it. However, when they contemplate the drastic changes it will bring to their lives, changes that might not please their families and communities, they hesitate, and even after taking the decision, they sometimes go back and change their minds later.

It is whispered in their ears that no matter how much money, prestige, status, and power an unbeliever may have possessed in this life, he or she will never have enough to buy entrance into paradise. In the hereafter, the poorest inhabitant of Earth who has testified to the truth of Islam will be far happier and more dignified than the richest person who did not accept the message of Islam.

Rejecting Allah’s message is the biggest sin that one can commit. For this reason, while the soul is still in his or her body, the wise individual should take this opportunity; he or she is still alive to accept Allah’s message before it is too late. The

time for repentance is limited because once death arrives, it is no longer possible to obtain forgiveness.[38] Allah has mentioned:

{[For such is the state of the disbelievers] until, when death comes to one of them, he says: My Lord, send me back that I might do righteousness in that which I left behind. No! It is only a word he is saying…}[39] *(Quran 23: 99-100)*

Religion is, without question, the most important aspect of a person's life, for it determines whether or not a person is rightly guided. It follows, therefore, that choosing the true faith is the most important personal decision one must make, and this decision needs to be based on clarity and total conviction. When it comes to matters of religion and creed, nothing must be left to chance because the one who is truly guided—as opposed to the one who is not—will surely find eternal happiness in the hereafter!

Having been presented with the previous proofs, we should use our intellect to analyse and reason. A crossroad has been reached, and Allah (Glorified is He) calls on all people to follow the clear, straight road and avoid all the murky, dubious ones. The right path has now become distinct from the wrong path, as Allah has mentioned:

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[38] Compiled from Caraballo, *My Great Love for Jesus Led Me to Islam*.

[39] The unbelievers will ask for a 'second chance' when they see the angels ready to punish them, but it will be too late; they were given the time, the intellect and the guidance, but they neglected it for years until time ran out.

{There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong, so whoever disbelieves in taghoot and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.}

(Quran 2: 256)

It is my duty and responsibility, as a resident of this great planet, and as one who has submitted my free will to the law and commandments of the Supreme Being, to urge all human beings to stay away from the worship of false deities—to stop putting their faith in statues, sphinxes, figures, amulets, talismans, horseshoes, and any other objects that have been manufactured by humans or created by God. After first repenting, a person should submit completely to the will of Allah, the Only God of the universe.

20. WHAT IS MOTIVATING PEOPLE TO TURN TO ISLAM?

It is a fact that Islam is growing rapidly in the West and around the world. In the U.S. alone, the number of Muslims has risen dramatically, from about 10,000 in 1900 to at least several million people today. Here are four main reasons that non-Muslims become Muslims:

1. Islam teaches that all believers are equal in the eyes of God, and it forbids any form of racism or discrimination due to colour, land of origin, tribe, etc.
2. Islam does not have a religious hierarchy; there is no priesthood in Islam, so individuals have a direct relationship with God, without intermediaries. All Muslims are taught to do good and avoid evil and to educate themselves about their religion, and they go to reputable scholars for knowledge and advice.
3. Islam teaches that all its followers are considered normal human beings. No one is allowed to exalt himself or herself over others by claiming divinity, or to deceive the community by claiming to have a direct message and/or direct alliance with God, or to have spoken with God. No one can make the false allegation that God has taken him as a son and that as a result of that, people should follow this person blindly!

   Unfortunately, some members of the clergy utilize this concept to deceive their followers for

their own personal benefit. An example is when they convince their followers that they cannot be questioned and are beyond reproach; some even solicit sexual relations from vulnerable individuals who come to ask them questions and/or seek forgiveness from sins through them.

I spoke to one young woman who turned to Islam after waking up from her sleep and discovering this huge lie and deceit… finally realizing that she had squandered her modesty and decency in the bed of a drunk clergyman!

4. Islam teaches its adherents to establish and strengthen their own direct relationship with Allah, where no intercession is needed from another person. In Islam, there is no church to act as an intermediary between an individual and Allah. It rejects the concept of seeking forgiveness of sins by confessing to a priest, an ordinary human being, who has no authority to absolve anyone of sin.

   Muslims must follow the guidance of God's law as it has been revealed, and this will lead them to success. If individuals err, they only have to turn to Allah, because He is the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful. Islam frees the mind from barriers and roadblocks, granting its followers unobstructed access to Allah. It teaches that Allah is the only One from Whom people should seek forgiveness. He does not need intermediaries (in any form) standing in between, presenting themselves as the gatekeepers to Allah and contending that only

through them may people have access to Him. Islam strictly rejects the man-made concept of confessing one's sin to a human being such as a "priest", and it rejects the act of seeking salvation through this person. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing, Most Merciful, and Most Knowledgeable. He is All-Rich. He does not need intermediaries to convey people's needs to Him. People only need to raise their hands and say, "Allah, please forgive me; I promise to repent," and Allah will forgive them.[40] That's it!

In general, this direct relationship is a means of accessing Allah's mercy and forgiveness. This concept is logical and straightforward; anyone would naturally be pleased to hear and believe it.

However, Allah (God) warns humankind that He refuses to forgive those who associate partners with Him:

{Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allah has certainly gone far astray.}

(Quran 4: 116)

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[40] Islam teaches that one must repent for the sake of Allah only (not out of compulsion or to be seen doing so), stop committing the sin, sincerely regret it, and intend not to return to it.

21. THE ISLAMIC STANCE ON TERRORISM[41]

Every religion has adherents who pervert it, like psychiatric patients who try to steal the truth and replace it with an alternate narrative. Describing a terrorist group as Islamic is like describing the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) as Christian. After all, KKK members use a cross and believe in Christ, yet they have persecuted and killed African-Americans in the name of religion and Christ.

Terrorists have various religions and political ideologies, and massacres have been committed in many countries with the aim of 'cleansing' those countries. There are people who claim the Jewish faith although their behaviour has nothing to do with Judaism, just as there are people who call themselves Hindus but whose actions actually have nothing to do with Hinduism. Bearing this in mind, claiming that terrorists are Islamic is preposterous.

In Islam's sacred book, the Quran, God instructs us to say that {You have your religion, and I have my religion}. (109:6) In other words, I am free to practice my faith, and you are free to practice your faith, since there is {no compulsion in religion}. (2:256) This is despite the fact that Islam makes it clear that it is the only religion that is still intact

[41] There is no universally accepted definition of terrorism; in general, it refers to threats and violence by a non-state actor against non-combatants, in the pursuit of ideological objectives and with the intent to create fear.

and not distorted, and hence it is the only religion accepted by God in the Hereafter.

The Quran also declares, {Whoever kills a soul… it is as if he had killed the whole humankind, and whoever saves one, it is as if he had saved all humankind}. (5:32)

Does humankind have any greater sign of tolerance and mercy than this?

Keeping in mind these teachings, and analysing them fairly and logically, we can conclude that terrorist organizations that commit acts which contradict the teachings of Islam do not represent Islam at all.

22. HOW TO BECOME A MUSLIM

Every religion has its own requirements for conversion.

Someone who wants to become Jewish must pledge all of the following:

1) To enter the ‘eternal covenant’ between God and the people of Israel and to become a Jew of his or her own free will;
2) To accept Judaism to the exclusion of all other religious faiths and practices, which means to deny the prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad (bpuh) and to deny the revelations that God sent to humankind through them;
3) An undivided loyalty to Judaism and to the Jewish people under all circumstances;
4) To commit to learning the Torah and other Jewish knowledge; and
5) To raise his or her children as Jews.

To be a Christian, one must:

1) Believe that God (Allah) has a partner, a mother, and a son;
2) Believe that every new-born baby is born sinful;
3) Believe that God became a man and descended to Earth to die for the sins of the people;
4) Deny the prophethood of Muhammad (bpuh) publicly; and
5) Deny that the Quran is a revelation from Allah, the Exalted.

However, to become a Muslim is simple. One must:

1) Bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah (in other words, disown all false gods),
2) Bear witness that Muhammad (bpuh) is His messenger,
3) Believe in all the six articles of faith, and
4) Worship Allah as taught by Prophet Muhammad (bpuh).

Hence, becoming a Muslim is a simple and easy process. If anyone has a real desire to be a Muslim and has full belief that Islam is the true religion of God, all he or she needs to do is to pronounce the *shahadah*, the testimony of faith.[42] Pronunciation of this testimony with a sincere heart brings the person into the fold of Islam. It is the main gateway to Islam.

Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) said:

«Whoever testifies that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, Who has no partner; that Muhammad is His slave and messenger; that Jesus is the slave of Allah, His prophet, and His word[43] which He bestowed in Mary and a spirit created from Him; that paradise (heaven) is true; and that the hellfire is true—Allah will eventually admit him into paradise, according to his deeds.»

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[42] The words of the *shahadah* are: *Ash-hadu al-la ilaha illa Allah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Abduhu wa Rasooluhu*. (I testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is His slave and messenger.)

[43] It means that Jesus was created when Allah said the word “Be”; when He said it, Jesus was created in the womb of his mother, Mary.

(Recorded by Bukhari)

The first part of the testimony consists of the most important words of truth that Allah has ever revealed to His noble prophets, "There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah." He has stated:

{And We sent not before you any messenger except that We revealed to him that: There is no deity except Me, so worship Me.}

(Quran 21: 25)

Bearing this testimony implies that all forms of worship—whether praying, fasting, supplicating, seeking refuge, or offering an animal as sacrifice—must be directed to Allah and to Him alone. Directing any form of worship to other than Allah (whether to an angel, a prophet, Jesus, Muhammad [bpuh], a saint, an idol, a statue, the sun, the moon, a tree, a cross, or anything else) contradicts the fundamental message not only of Islam but of all the prophets; it is an unforgivable sin in the hereafter, so one must repent before death.

The second part of the testimony means that Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) is the slave and the chosen messenger of Allah.[44] This implies that a true Muslim obeys and follows the commands of the Prophet (bpuh) as mentioned in the collections of his hadiths. One must believe in what he has said, practice his teachings, and avoid what he has forbidden because the hadiths were, in fact,

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[44] The meaning of 'slavery to Allah' was explained in Chapter 11: The Meaning of Worship in Islam.

revelations and inspiration conveyed to him by Allah.

As mentioned earlier, Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) was sent in order to implement the Quran in a practical way through his sayings, deeds, and legislation, as well as all other facets of life. When his wife Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) was asked about his character, she replied:

«His character was that of the Quran.»

(Recorded by Muslim and Abu Dawood)

Hence, to truly adhere to the second part of the shahadah is to follow his example in all walks of life. Allah has mentioned:

{Say [O Muhammad]: If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.} *(Quran 3: 31)*

A true Muslim must strive to mould his or her life and character to emulate the Prophet (bpuh), for he was a living example for human beings to follow. Allah has said to His Prophet (bpuh):

{And indeed, you are of a great moral character.} *(Quran 68: 4)*

Allah has also said to all people:

{There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.} *(Quran 33: 21)*

When one enters the fold of Islam, all previous sins are forgiven; one starts a new life of piety and righteousness since he or she, in essence, has repented from the ways and beliefs of the previous life. One man told the Prophet (bpuh) that he would accept Islam only under the condition that Allah would forgive his sins; the Prophet (bpuh) asked him:

«Do you not know that accepting Islam destroys all sins that came before it?» (Recorded by Muslim)

As soon as a person accepts Islam, he or she is free of all previous sins. The person's record is wiped clean, as if he or she was born that very day. One should try as much as possible to keep his or her records clean and strive to do as many good deeds as possible; the more good deeds, the more he or she will be elevated in paradise.

It should be emphasized again that accepting Islam does not mean turning your back on the messages of previous prophets (peace be upon them all). Indeed, it is a fulfilment of those messages. Therefore, if you are a Jew or a Christian, accepting Islam and following Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) is a fulfilment of the messages which Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them) brought, as has been clearly described and proven in the author's book *The Amazing Prophecies of Muhammad (bpuh) in the Bible: Twenty-Eight Proofs from the Bible of Muhammad's Prophethood*.

On the other hand, rejecting Islam means turning your back not only on Prophet Muhammad

(bpuh) but also on Prophets Moses and Jesus. Doing so is actually a clear violation of their messages, and it diminishes your hope of paradise in the hereafter.

It is now up to you to decide where your own future home will be. I wish you all the best!

23. BEST DECISION THEY EVER MADE

Islam is often called the fastest growing religion, and each person who embraces Islam has a unique story and unique reasons. Despite widespread misconceptions about women in Islam, a growing number of women are finding that Islam is the true religion and the best way of life. Ann Ronayne's story is below; she welcomes emails from readers and can be reached at ann.ronayne1@gmail.com.

> "Me? Go live in Kuwait? No way!" That was my reaction when my manager tried to persuade me to take a position in Kuwait. But I was to learn that {...the command of Allah is a decree of predestiny that is ever fulfilled.} *(Quran 33: 38)*[45]
>
> I was born and raised in suburban Washington, D.C. in a Catholic family, and I attended Catholic schools. In the 1960s, the Catholic Church made major changes in its teachings in an attempt to be more modern; it tried to focus more on positive aspects and de-emphasize what was considered negative: punishment, regulations, abstinence from certain foods at certain times, etc. (Even so, Catholics in the West routinely ignored many of the rules that still existed, such as the prohibitions on contraceptives.) The Mass, which had always been said in Latin, was said in English instead. The nuns who taught us replaced their habits (modest dress)

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[45] This translation is taken from Hammad, *The Gracious Quran*.

with modern clothes. Our religion classes had never involved reading the Bible, but now, instead of focusing on religious beliefs, they involved discussion of social issues and singing a lot of contemporary folk songs, as did the new Masses. It seemed strange that so much of what we had been taught as the truth was now completely changed. Still, when we prepared for our first Holy Communion, we were taught that the bread that the priest was putting in our mouths was the actual body of Jesus (which would bleed if we were to bite it). For these and many other reasons, I doubted my religion and rejected it from a young age.

My decision was only confirmed as I learned more. If the trinity was such an important concept, why hadn't Jesus explained that clearly (and repeated it over and over again)? If God wanted to forgive us, He could have done that without coming to Earth Himself and being crucified to atone for our sins. Was it Jesus the man or Jesus the God who died on the cross, and how can God – Who has no beginning or end – die? If God did send His son (who was also God?) down to Earth to guide us, why would He neglect to give us the message during his thirty-three years, so that the truth had to be discovered and given to us later by Paul, who never even met Jesus?! If Christianity were the true religion, why didn't Jesus himself live and teach it?

For many years, I considered myself an atheist or an agnostic, but I was never concerned with choosing a label. I thought it was enough that I tried to be a good person, and I felt that nonbelievers

actually did more good works because they didn't depend on any supernatural being for help. I never felt that I was searching for answers about the purpose of life or about religious beliefs.

After the Gulf War, I was working as a computer consultant when my company was offered a position in Kuwait which was perfect for me. My initial reaction was that I had no desire to go and work in a place where I thought women were treated as second-class citizens; after all, I had the usual stereotypes about women in a place like Kuwait. The manager on location assured me that the working environment was professional and that there were many bright women in the organization, including those who would be my supervisor and manager. I was eventually persuaded to take the contract for one year, thinking that it would be an adventure.

I soon learned that all of the stereotypes I had brought with me were wrong.

My colleagues were always friendly and respectful, and it occurred to me that it was almost the only environment I'd ever worked in where I saw no evidence of sexual harassment—not even any off-colour jokes or racy calendars hanging in cubicles. (It was certainly different from the atmosphere I'd experienced in the US military.) The women working with me were university graduates and were not shy about speaking out, and most chose to wear Islamic dress. Advertisements did not use women's bodies to sell products.

I was impressed to see the bonds among families and members of the society in general. When one colleague lost his pay check, all of the men quickly pitched in until they had collected the same amount of money for him. People also gave generously to the needy, both locally and globally.

When someone's mother called and said she needed something, the person would leave work to take her to the doctor or get what she needed. If a man's uncle died, all the men attended the funeral prayer; if a woman's aunt died, all the women went to visit her to give their condolences. When someone married or had a baby or recovered from an operation, an extensive network of family members, friends and colleagues shared that experience. Hospital rooms were large and even furnished with sofas and chairs to accommodate all the visitors.

The attitude towards the elderly was different from what I was used to, since extended families lived together, with several generations in one house; the children who didn't live in the same house came to visit often, if not daily. Grandparents had children and grandchildren living with them and were not left to live and die alone, or sent to nursing homes (which don't even exist). Older women were highly respected; they did not feel the need to make themselves look young and beautiful in order to gain self-esteem. Taking care of one's elderly parents was seen as a blessing and an opportunity for doing good deeds, rather than a burden, and care of one's parents is emphasized in the moral system of Islam. (This is not to say that non-Muslims in the West

don’t care about their parents, but there are different priorities and expectations. There is usually more of an emphasis on nuclear families and independence, with the elderly themselves not wishing to be a burden on their families.) In general, dealing with difficult situations was seen as a test and not a cause for despair. Taking one’s own life was rare and also forbidden because only Allah has that right.

When the month of Ramadan came around, I was amazed by the idea that one billion Muslims around the world were fasting together—abstaining from food and drink every day from long before sunrise until the sun set. I joined them in fasting the entire month, although I had no intention of becoming Muslim and didn’t experience the spiritual recharge that I would feel later as a Muslim.

At the time, I knew little about Islam, and I’m embarrassed to say now that I considered it a backwards religion which would only appeal to the ignorant masses. As I slowly realized that the stereotypes I had brought with me were all wrong, I became curious about the religion. As I learned more, I discovered that Islam was the reason for the moral system I had witnessed, and that these positive social aspects had been part of Islamic societies throughout the centuries. Even small things that had struck me—such as greetings given among strangers when one entered an elevator or an office—had their basis in Islamic teachings.

I got a Quran translation and some other books and began reading. Over and over again, I was surprised at what I found—and perhaps more by what I didn't find. I found a belief system which was rational and uncluttered, and I didn't find the oppression of women or terrorism that I had expected. I was attracted by the emphasis on social justice and standing up against oppression.

Obviously, the key question about religion is deciding whether or not it is true. Since this decision must rely on faith to some extent, how can we really know? One factor is the credibility of the sources; in the case of Islam, the most important source is the Quran.

I was struck by its scientific accuracy, demonstrated by statements which describe scientific phenomena that were not discovered until recently. I learned that the Islamic world had made major contributions to scientific knowledge and was the seat of civilization and learning while Europe was in the Dark Ages. Logically, I knew that an illiterate seventh century Arab could not have written this book himself. I began to question my idea that there was no Creator—that the intricate systems that made up the universe and its life forms could have developed randomly or that we were born, lived, and died with no purpose.

I was impressed that the Quran had never been changed over the years, so that the Quran we read today (in its original Arabic) is exactly the same as that revealed to Muhammad (bpuh) and passed on to

his followers 1400 years ago. All Muslims memorize parts of it, and there are millions of people around the world who have memorized it in its entirety, so even if every copy disappeared today from the face of the earth, it would be easily recorded again. I couldn't help but to contrast that with the Bible, a collection of books written by various people over time; different Christian sects do not even agree on which books are included, and in some cases, scholars do not even know who wrote the books. We do not have the original sources, and there are different versions of the later sources. There are many contradictions, and the New Testament actually rejects many of the teachings of the Old Testament.

I was surprised to find out that Islam had the same roots as Judaism and Christianity, and that Muslims believed in the same prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (peace be upon them all).

I began to understand why Muslims loved Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) so much, and I wondered why I never knew anything about him… never even knew that he was a historical figure about whom so much was known, and whose gravesite is known and visited. Authentic narrations from those who were closest to him describe him as a modest, truthful man who stood up for justice and against oppression.

I used to walk along the beach at night, looking up at the moon and stars and reflecting on Allah's

creation, as the Quran recommended. I became convinced that the Quran must have been a message from God, but it took me a while to actually accept Islam… yet it was so rational and simple in its essence: one God, one Creator of the universe and everything in it, Who offered us guidance to make the best of our lives in this life and the next. Obviously, there are more details, but this sums up the Islamic beliefs, and one who accepts this is essentially a Muslim.

The concept seemed so pure and logical, especially when compared to the concept of the trinity, which cannot be explained rationally. There are three Gods, but they are one God? Jesus is both fully divine and fully human, so that he is all powerful yet experiences hunger and thirst and other physical needs? Moreover, this uncomplicated main principle of Islam – that there is one God – is repeated over and over again in the Quran, in the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh), and in the prayers of ordinary Muslims. If the trinity were the true essence of God, wouldn't it have been clearly explained and mentioned over and over again?

In Islam, God is just; He does not hold any of us accountable for the sins of another, which we had nothing to do with. There is no concept of original sin or of a crucifixion required to redeem all of us from that original sin perpetrated by someone else.

Of course, there were aspects that made me reluctant to make such a momentous change in my

life. For example, although I understood the purpose and the benefits of Islamic dress, I couldn't imagine wearing it myself until I attended a Ramadan dinner at an organization for English-speaking Muslim women and met dozens of Western women who had converted to Islam, and who felt proud to dress this way.

For all the reasons mentioned above, and under no pressure from anyone, I came to the conclusion that the Quran was the word of God, and that Islam was the true religion.

On the day that I decided I was ready to officially declare my Islamic faith, I asked a co-worker to help me do so officially. There is actually no requirement to say this publicly or to get any kind of certificate; the declaration of faith is simply a matter of testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad (bpuh) is his Messenger. It was a very moving experience, since I was essentially starting life over again, with a clean slate. It was undoubtedly the best decision I've ever made.

When we returned to the office, I went back to my desk and resumed work. It didn't occur to me that this was anything but a personal decision, and no one even knew that I was considering it… but my friend informed everyone, and to my surprise, I received congratulations from well-wishers for the rest of the day. That evening, she invited me to her aunt's house, and with only a few hours' notice, her mother, sisters, aunts, and cousins (most of whom I'd never met before) had a party for me, complete

with gifts of Qurans, prayer dresses, gold, etc. Over the next days and weeks, I received dozens of gifts from co-workers (some of whom I had never met), friends, and acquaintances. I was very blessed, for I know that others who embrace Islam sometimes encounter many hardships.

In my feminist years, we spoke of 'sisterhood', but this was my introduction to true sisterhood. Muslim women considered me their sister, simply for the sake of Allah (God). Over the years, I've met so many amazing Muslim women of all nationalities and classes and educational backgrounds, and in our gatherings, we often talk about how blessed we are and how different our lives are from what many people think. It's hard to describe the feeling of standing in prayer, shoulder to shoulder with so many different women, knowing that we are sisters in Islam whether or not we even know each other.

It took me several weeks to build up the courage to wear the hijab (Islamic headscarf), but I found it liberating in a way that I hadn't expected. I was worried when I travelled to the U.S. wearing the hijab soon after becoming Muslim, but I needn't have been. Everywhere I went, I was greeted by other Muslims with the Islamic greeting *Assalamu alaykum* (Peace be upon you). I felt welcomed as a part of the worldwide Muslim community, and the hijab was what made that possible; if I wasn't wearing it, other Muslims would not have recognized that I was also Muslim and would not have offered those greetings.

I don’t mean to claim that the Muslim community is some sort of utopia. Certainly, there are problems, but the problems are not from Islam; on the contrary, they are due to ignorance and rejection of Islamic beliefs and practices. The reality is that Islam does not need a reformation; Muslims do.

Other Muslims who were formerly Christian

There are many Christian women and men from all backgrounds who have embraced Islam. The following is just a small sample of well-known contemporary Muslims who sincerely studied Christianity before rejecting it in favour of Islam. They were chosen because their stories (as well as their books, articles, and videos) are easily accessible online in English.

Dr Jerald Dirks is an American former Methodist deacon (minister) with a Master's in Divinity from Harvard University and a PhD in Psychology from the University of Denver. The more he studied the Bible, the more he realized that he could not accept Christian teachings, and the more he dreaded going back to preaching what he knew was not true. When he took his questions to other ministers whom he respected, some of them admitted (behind closed doors) that they agreed with him, but they could not abandon their religion without breaking up their families and

cutting off their livelihoods. Dr Dirks, along with his wife Debra, realized that Islam was the religion that actually followed the message brought by Jesus (pbuh) and other Prophets of God. Read more about them at http://www.jeralddirksanddebradirks.com/.

Yusha (Joshua) Evans was attending a Bible College in the southern United States, learning to read the Bible in Hebrew and Greek and intending to become a Christian missionary or minister. After reading the Bible cover-to-cover six or seven times, he was left wondering at the inaccuracies and inconsistencies he noticed. He left Christianity and began searching for the truth, but no religion satisfied him until he found Islam. See more about him at https://yushaevans.com/.

Aminah Assilmi (d. 2010, may Allah have mercy on her) was an American Baptist who found herself in a class with some Arab Muslims and decided to try to convert them to Christianity. When her attempts failed, she asked for a copy of their Quran so that she could read it and show them the error of their ways. After one and a half years of research, she ended up embracing Islam instead.

Dr David Liepert is a Canadian anaesthesiologist who started studying Islam with the intention of showing his Muslim colleagues that they were wrong and that Christianity was the truth. He sought to prove this by studying the Bible and trying to answer his own questions... yet he couldn't find the evidence to support his beliefs. His story is narrated in *Choosing Faith: Rediscovering the Commonalities Between Christianity & Islam*, which is available online at http://www.choosingfaith.com/.

Idris Tawfiq (d. 2016, may Allah have mercy on him) was a British writer and broadcaster who touched the hearts of many. He had a degree in English Language and Literature and taught in both the UK and Egypt. He also had a degree in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome; before embracing Islam, Idris was a Roman Catholic priest.

24. TO SUM IT UP…

The creation and existence of everything in this world has a purpose and wisdom behind it. Human beings are the most superior creation because Allah has given them the intellect, has created everything for them, and has given them power and knowledge over most of the creation. There is obviously a specific purpose behind their existence, and this has been elaborated in this book.

Wise people are expected to behave and act in accordance with the purpose of their existence; they should not remain oblivious to the final destination, which they are going to reach one day or another.

25. CONCLUSION

The following twenty-five facts were discussed in this book:

First, the purpose of creation is to worship Allah alone.

Second, the basic message of Islam is to worship Allah alone, without any intercessor or mediator. Any form of worship that is not dedicated to Allah alone will be rejected for being a form of polytheism, which amounts to apostasy from the Islamic point of view.

Third, the evidence that only Allah has the right to be worshipped was elaborated.

Fourth, Islam is a restatement of the basic message of all religions: worship Allah alone. It is the last religion, for all people and for all times. So all people—whether they were raised as Jews, Christians, Hindus, atheists, or with any other creed—should follow Islam once they hear about it, pronouncing the testimony right away to become Muslim without further delay. Whoever rejects it has rejected the message of Allah, and accordingly will be cast into hell. Such people cannot expect guidance after they have deliberately renounced guidance.

Fifth, Islam's belief system is uniquely rational, simple, and uncomplicated. It rejects all forms of polytheism and false beliefs.

Sixth, both the divine origin of the name of the religion 'Islam' and the comprehensiveness of its meaning point to its truth.

Seventh, the message of false religions is paganism (the worship of creatures, rather than the Creator).

Eighth, Islam is the only religion today that teaches the right concept of Allah, free of any confusion or irrational facts.

Ninth, Islam's basic principles and characteristics point to its truth.

Tenth, indeed, Islam is the only religion that fights extremism—whether that extremism comes from secularism and materialism or from excessive spiritualism. Islam ensures a balance among spiritual, moral and materialistic needs. It is truly the middle path and is a perfectly balanced way of life. This should not be surprising, because Islamic teachings are not man-made; they have been revealed to humanity by Allah the Creator, the Most Wise and Most Knowledgeable.

Eleventh, the truth of every religion depends on its original revelation from Allah having been accurately preserved. This rule is only satisfied by Islamic teachings. The Quran is the final word of Allah, which has been preserved throughout the ages; hence it supersedes all previous scriptures.

Twelfth, Islam is the final religion, intended for all humankind. Everyone therefore should embrace it.

Thirteenth, Allah and His creation are totally different entities. He is One, distinct from His creations.

Fourteenth, Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) was sent to all people. He is the last prophet, and his teaching, Islam, will remain the only correct and authentically revealed teaching until the Day of Judgement.

Fifteenth, prophets were human beings chosen and sent by Allah to convey and revive the original message: worship of Allah alone (monotheism) and being careful not to worship anything other than Him. Prophets were living examples of how the scriptures were to be understood and implemented.

Sixteenth, the reality of the prophets and their uniform message are revived and can only be found preserved in Islamic teachings, manifested in the Quran and the statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh). These are the only authentic and proven resource documents today that preserve the essence of their message. They guide those who follow it to a way of life that is more consistent with the way of life of Jesus and Moses than that which is practiced by most Christians and Jews today. They guide to the love and respect of Jesus, Moses, and all the other prophets (may Allah’s blessings be upon them all).

Seventeenth, Islam considers disrespect of any prophet as stepping out of the boundaries of Islam.

Eighteenth, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virtuous woman, honoured above the women of all nations in that time.

Nineteenth, it has been proven that the Bible is widely distorted; this implies that Christianity has been distorted as well, as is evident from several doctrines introduced by humans into Christianity, which resulted in its deviation from pure monotheism into tri-theism within the first 400 years after Jesus' ascension. It should be noted that those who followed the scriptures in their pure and unadulterated forms, and then died before hearing the message of Islam, were considered to have been on the right religion, and they will have nothing to fear on the Day of Judgement.

Twentieth, oral traditions passed on for generations were substantially changed from the original message. People who had never even seen Jesus began to write books focusing on his personality more than his message. These articles became overly exaggerated, losing the true essence of his existence and message while they exalted him to extreme heights. This then posed a problem for Christianity as divisions arose in the doctrine, with different groups each espousing their own theories and explanations. This resulted in variant notions of the crucifixion, the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, the divine sonship of Christ, original sin, and atonement. The following cardinal doctrines of Christianity are rejected by Islam:

- The Trinity
- The divinity of Jesus

- The notion that Jesus is the son of God
- Original sin
- Atonement (reconciliation between God and humankind brought about by the life and death of Jesus)
- Redemption (salvation from sin through Jesus' sacrifice)

Twenty-first, the popular Christian concept of salvation is inaccurate. The true way to achieve salvation is to do good deeds, to avoid and repent from sins, and to follow the commandments mentioned in the scriptures, sealed and superseded by the Quran. Islam teaches that sin cannot be transferred from one person to another, and it cannot be inherited. Each person is accountable for his or her own deeds and will be rewarded accordingly. Allah has mentioned:

{And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer,[46] those will enter paradise and will not be wronged [even so much as] the speck on a date seed.} *(Quran 4: 124)*

Twenty-second, there is evidence in many places in the Old and New Testaments (in their present form) that Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) was mentioned by his illustrious predecessors, namely Prophets Jesus and Moses (may Allah's blessings be upon them). With this decisive and factual evidence, it is only befitting that sincere Christians and Jews accept Islam as a continuation of the

[46] Believing in the six pillars of faith, which are mentioned in Chapter 9: The Six Articles of Islamic Faith.

prophets' legacy left by all the messengers and prophets. Just as one cannot be a Muslim until he or she believes in Muhammad (bpuh) and all the prophets sent before him, no one is a true Jew or Christian until he or she believes in Muhammad, the prophet prophesied in both the Old and New Testaments; hence, Jews and Christians should enter Islam's fold wholeheartedly.

Twenty-third, the way to please Allah has been detailed for us. The Quran defines it clearly, and the Prophet (bpuh) gives us details at every point.

Twenty-fourth, God (Allah) is One, His message is one, and the way to Him is one: namely Islam. Allah has specified in the Quran:

{And [moreover] this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous.}

(Quran 6: 153)

Twenty-fifth—last but not least—Islam is your birthright. Yes, you read correctly. Islam is your *right*. Every human being is born into the religion of Islam, and human beings are naturally drawn to what we already know. Thus, if you accept Islam, you are not turning your back on any prior revelation but rather returning to the original pure belief with which you were created. This being the case, Islam is your birthright, whereas other religious or ideological systems teach you to deviate from the pure belief with which you were created.

These are the twenty-five basic components which logically and rationally dictate that Islam should be considered the last and true religion of Allah.

REMEMBER THIS

To accurately identify the true religion, you must maintain an objective point of view, one which does not allow your emotions to cloud your vision and thereby blind you to the truth. Indeed, you must look at all issues rationally so that you can separate truth from falsehood; then make a judgment and follow it with sincere prayers asking the Almighty to guide you to the right path.

Now that you have read this book and examined the evidence regarding the truthfulness of Islam, I pray to God Almighty that you can and will make the right choice! I invite you to choose Islam as your way of life and to get yourself on the right path! *La ilaha illa Allah* (There is no deity worthy of worship except God), *Muhammadan Rasool Allah* (Muhammad is the Messenger of God).

May the light of truth shine in our minds and in our hearts. May it lead us to peace and certitude in this life and to eternal bliss in the hereafter.

Kind regards,

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APPENDIX

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- islamtomorrow.com
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- edialogue.org (live chat)
- islamhouse.com/en/ (thousands of free books)
- iera.org/shop/ (free downloads)
- iiph.com

GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC TERMS[47]

abu (or *abi*)	father (of)
alhamdulillah	all praise is due to Allah
bismillah	in the name of Allah
Hadith	the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) that with the Quran form the basis of Islamic law
hadith	a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers
Hajj	the major pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque, site of the Kaaba in Makkah, to be undertaken by every able Muslim once in his or her lifetime
hijab	veil ordained by Allah for believing women
jinn (sg. *jinni*)	non-human, rational beings created by Allah from fire, often referred to as 'demons' or 'devils'. They have free will like humans: some are Muslims, others disbelievers; some are obedient to Allah, others disobedient. Satan is a jinni. Some people try to 'foretell' the future by

[47] If a word has become part of the English language (i.e., is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book.

	contacting a jinni. Some disobedient jinn mislead people into thinking that they can tell them what will happen in the future, near or far, or that the jinn can provide people with riches or some sort of power.
Kaaba	the House of Allah in Makkah, originally built by Prophets Abraham and Ishmael
mahram	a degree of consanguinity precluding marriage; a man whom a woman may not marry due to the close blood or marriage relationship, e.g., her father, brother, son, uncle, or father-in-law
Ramadan	the ninth month in the Islamic calendar; the month of obligatory fasting
shahadah	the Islamic testimony of faith: *Ash-hadu al-la ilaha illa Allah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Abduhu wa Rasooluhu*. (I testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is His slave and messenger.)
Sharia	Islamic law derived from the Quran and the statements and actions of the Prophet (bpuh)
taghoot	idols; everything evil that is worshipped
zakah	obligatory charity payable by Muslims, to be distributed to poor Muslims who qualify as recipients